

FROM MILITARY EXPRESS TO FREE DELIVERY:
THE POSTAL HISTORY OF
DES MOINES, IOWA,
1843-1873

A Thesis
Presented to
The School of Graduate Studies
Drake University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
James S. Leonardo
December 1984

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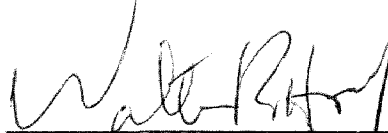
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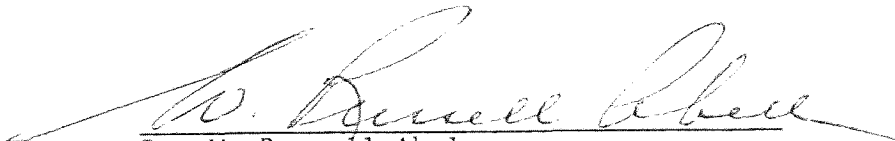
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An abstract of a Thesis by
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December 1984
Drake University
Advisor: Walter R. Houf

The problem. The role of postal history on the urban frontier has not been adequately explored by urban historians. The inauguration of postal service in fledgling Midwestern towns served to not only unite separated family and friends, to legitimize place names, and to introduce politics into communities, but through the mail towns were promoted, newspapers gathered the news, new businesses replenished their shelves, and politicians wooed the voters. A detailed examination of the first thirty years of postal service in Des Moines, Iowa, will help to determine how widespread the influence of the mail was on the urban frontier, and will reveal the continuous effort expended toward realizing the goal of improved postal service.

Procedure. Daily newspapers and obscure Post Office Department reports constitute the basic sources for the small details that tell the story of postal service improvement. Therefore the main research of this study consisted of the reading of all available Des Moines newspapers published during the period, and searching out applicable Iowa mail contract bid information in Post Office Department reports contained in the voluminous United States Congressional "serial set." Private papers of the postmasters and other politicians provided the political stories behind postmaster appointments.

Conclusions. The remarkable advance in postal service experienced by the city of Des Moines during the first thirty years of its existence can be attributed to strategic location, energetic businessmen-postmasters, and a determined manipulation of the political process. In a narrower vein, the study shows that postal matters (delivery time, postal rates, postage stamps, stationery, and postcards) played a greater role in everyday life than urban historians have heretofore indicated. And surviving examples of early Des Moines covers (envelopes) and letters prove that postal efforts to unite the city with the greater American community succeeded.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

From the onset of European settlement of the North American continent, through the closing of the American frontier in 1890, one of the first concerns of all American villages, towns, and cities was for a means of communication to unite friends and family, promote business, and foster a democratic government.

In the beginning, with settlements few and far apart, the desire centered on trans-Atlantic communication. Ship captains provided this service in a haphazard fashion, and soon the growing American populace generated such a flood of return letters from the Old World that the Massachusetts General Court in 1639 attempted to introduce some order in the distribution of mail by ordering that all letters brought from overseas be deposited at the house of Richard Fairbanks in Boston. Fairbanks was allowed one penny for each such letter he took under his charge.¹

This makeshift post office, the first recorded in the United States, was in 1652 duplicated in kind by the Dutch at New Amsterdam, but it was not until 1693 that any attempt was made to maintain a permanent inter-colonial postal service. This route, connecting New Hampshire with Delaware (and later Virginia), was operated by Andrew Hamilton under Thomas Neale's patent from the British crown.²

¹ Wesley Everett Rich, The History of the United States Post Office to the Year 1829 (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1924), pp. 3-4.

² Ibid., pp. 5, 12-20.

Hamilton's private venture, which because of high and uneven rates always ran at a two-to-one deficit of expenditures versus receipts, was taken over by the British Post Office Department in 1707. London increased postal rates and extended the coastal post road south to Charleston but it was not until 1753, when Benjamin Franklin and William Hunter of Virginia were appointed joint Postmasters General for the colonies, that the system came under efficient management and operated with a surplus. Even so, the attempt to maintain regular service was a constant and sometimes losing battle against bad weather, high rivers, unavailable or uncooperative ferrymen, poor or nonexistent roads, and a lack of post houses on long stretches of the route.¹

These same problems continued to plague the United States Government Postal Service into the last decades of the 19th century. They were a natural consequence of the government's attempt to accomplish the nearly impossible task of extending the mail routes to every new settlement on the ever-expanding westward line of the American frontier.

This line can, in fact, be traced in the postal records. At the close of the American Revolution the main coastal post road was extended south to Savannah, Georgia, but the energies of the Postmaster General were directed more toward the development of inland service than the overseas business. In 1788 a post road to Pittsburgh began operation and in 1792 routes were opened not only to central New York and Vermont, but via Staunton, Virginia, across the mountains, to Danville, Kentucky.

¹ Ibid., pp. 17-20, 23-41.

In 1794 offices were opened at Marietta, Gallipolis, and Cincinnati, Ohio, in Lexington, Frankfort, and Harrodsburg, Kentucky, and at Knoxville, Tennessee. The Ohio towns were supplied by mail boats down the Ohio River which braved Indian attacks to keep that line of communication open. The total mileage of United States post roads increased from 1,875 in 1790 to 20,817 in 1799. The number of post offices in this same decade jumped from 75 to 903!¹

Up to 1800 most efforts of the Post Office Department centered on finding the best way over the Appalachian mountain barrier. The measure of success achieved in these efforts can be seen in the fact that by 1804 American post offices had been established on the east bank of the Mississippi River at Cahokia, Kaskaskia, Fort Massac, Natchez, and New Orleans, the last named place being supplied by a tenuous post road crossing Spanish West Florida. In 1805 postal service jumped the Mississippi River to New Madrid, St. Genevieve, and St. Louis, and by 1828 post offices had been established up the Missouri River as far as Fort Leavenworth, and on the upper Mississippi at Rock Island, Galena, Prairie du Chien, and Fort Snelling. By 1829 an astounding 8,004 United States post offices were in operation, serviced by 115,000 miles of post road.²

The first post office in Iowa was established at Du Buque's Mines May 27, 1833, four days before legal settlement was even allowed in

¹ Ibid., pp. 68-76.

² Ibid., pp. 75-90, 117.

that then unorganized territory. And, of course, from that point on the pace never slowed. By June 30, 1843, when the construction of Fort Des Moines No. 2 generated the first real need for communication at the spot now occupied by the city of Des Moines, 102 post offices were in operation in Iowa Territory. The western fringe of these offices stretched in an irregular line from Millville in Clayton County to the north, south through Marion, Iowa City, Washington, and Fairfield, to Fox in Davis County along the Missouri border.¹

Throughout the states and territories the inauguration of postal service served to welcome a new settlement into the greater American community, but its benefits didn't stop there. As the settlement grew to a town so did the frequency and impact of postal service. Through the mail the town was promoted, fledgling businesses secured new goods and customers, and politicians wooed the voters. As central as the post office was in the evolution of the American urban frontier it is surprising how little attention the academic community has given it. Daniel J. Boorstin, in his preface to Wayne E. Fuller's 1972 book The American Mail, stated that no institution has been more effective in cementing community or more essential to the function and growth of a democratic government than the system by which mail is delivered:

¹ James S. Leonardo, "Iowa," in American Stampless Cover Catalog, 3rd ed. (North Miami, Fla.: David G. Phillips, 1978), pp. 54-60; Register of All Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval, in the Service of the United States (Washington, D.C.: J. & G. S. Gideon, Printers, 1843), pp. 578-82. While Millville was the northernmost post office of present-day Iowa in the territorial period, Iowa Territory included what is now the State of Minnesota so technically Fort Snelling would have been the northernmost office.

Yet from American historians the mail has not received its due. And our national myopia is betrayed in the fact that the abundant new courses in "communications" in schools and colleges, preoccupied with radio and television, allow us to forget the central role of the mail in the history of American life.¹

Fuller's book did help to rescue the subject on the national level, but no one has ever attempted a similar, multifaceted study on the local level.² Urban historians have, for the most part, taken postal service for granted, carefully presenting the fruits of such service as community building blocks, but leaving out the keystone that allowed the positioning of these blocks.

Carl Bridenbaugh briefly reviewed the post office's contribution to commerce in colonial cities, but most studies of Midwestern cities have completely ignored this and all other areas of the mail's influence.³ One looks in vain for any mention of post offices or postal service in the index to Richard Wade's Urban Frontier. A careful reading of Wade's text reveals only one mention of such service--that it existed in Pittsburgh by 1800. Wade, on the other hand, goes into considerable detail in portraying commerce as "the central nexus of the urbanization of the West," and newspapers as "the unifying element

¹ Wayne E. Fuller, The American Mail: Enlarger of the Common Life (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972), p. ix.

² Two excellent general studies, in addition to Fuller, are Rich, The History of the United States Post Office to the Year 1829, and Gerald Cullinan, The Post Office Department (New York: Praeger, 1968).

³ Carl Bridenbaugh, Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America, 1625-1742 (New York: Ronald, 1938), pp. 204-05, 361-62.

of urban culture."¹ When one considers that business houses of the time could not prosper without the mail, or newspapers gather or distribute the news, the importance of the post office in urban history becomes obvious.

While the index to Louis Atherton's Main Street on the Middle Border contains no reference to anything postal in nature, a reading of the text reveals that Atherton did encounter the following evidence of the importance of the post office: It was contained in the community's first store, farmers came to town for their mail, the post office served as a social meeting place, streets and houses went unmarked until the coming of house-to-house delivery, and the sending of greetings on Valentine's day was an important social tradition.² Although Atherton fails to enlarge on any of these findings they do serve as examples of the type of topics that can be dealt with in the postal history of any town.

This study of the establishment and further development of written communication in Des Moines, Iowa, during the first thirty years of the city's history, was begun with the question of just how much primary postal information could be found and whether it would agree with Fuller's generalizations on the national level, or with the few, sketchy generalizations put forth by urban historians. The study was

¹ Richard C. Wade, The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830 (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 13, 66, 130-32.

² Lewis Atherton, Main Street on the Middle Border (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1954), pp. 3, 52-53, 181, 184, 197.

also begun as a challenge to see whether an accumulation of obscure information on postal service in Des Moines could be transformed into a narrative touchstone of the town's whole development within the given period.

Research was carried out with a view to showing, at every stage of development, the key role played by the mail in military, government, business, and social advancement on the urban frontier. It was hoped that a close scrutiny of the primary sources would provide answers to such questions as: (1) How communication was maintained with Fort Des Moines No. 2 and the Raccoon River Indian Agency prior to the establishment of the first post office in what is now Des Moines? (2) What part did the post office play in the community's first political contests, and what enticement did the office of postmaster hold for the would-be appointee? (3) What impact did new postal laws, the arrival of the first postage stamps, and the removal of the capitol from Iowa City to Des Moines have on the Des Moines mail? (4) What were the transportation improvements that occurred over the thirty-year period that both promoted town growth and speeded up the delivery of mail? Parlaying the postal service into a touchstone of all community activity necessitated a considerable retelling of the city's early history; in doing so I attempted to use as much unpublished material as possible.

Daily newspapers and obscure Post Office Department reports constitute the basic sources for the small details that tell the story of postal service improvement. Therefore the main research for this study

consisted of the reading of every page of every available Des Moines newspaper published during the period 1849-1873, and searching out applicable Iowa mail contract bid information in Post Office Department reports contained in the voluminous United States Congressional "serial set." To obtain the political story behind postmaster appointments I also drew on the private papers of the postmasters as well as those of other Iowa political leaders of the time.

While the study of private papers had to be carried out at the Iowa Department of History and Archives, and through written requests for selected photocopies from out-of-state institutions, the bulk of the primary research was conducted in Cowles Library. This was possible because of the library's recent purchase of a complete run of the Des Moines Register on microfilm, and the 1976 gift of a nearly complete "serial set" from the Des Moines Public Library. These primary sources were supplemented by secondary monographs and journal articles mostly available in Cowles Library.

A number of private manuscript/postal history collections were also consulted. While these collections are listed in the bibliography, they are, at the owners' request (for reasons of security), not mentioned in the individual footnotes.

Since the cover (envelope) is to the postal historian what the artifact is to the archaeologist, examples will not only be liberally used as figure illustrations in Appendix A but also, in the absence of other evidence, will be relied upon to supply the missing information. Charts of known postmark usage will also be included as Appendix B, not

only as an additional illustration of postal development, but also as a useful tool for historians and archivists to use in more accurately dating early undated letters from Des Moines.

It is hoped that this exploration of the myriad details of postal service and urban life, that in combination recount the importance of the post office in the early development of Des Moines, will inspire similar studies of other Midwestern cities. It is only when a number of cities have been so explored that meaningful comparisons can be drawn on the local as well as the national level.

CHAPTER TWO

Pre-Settlement Communication, 1700s-1846

Two hundred twisting miles upstream from its confluence with the Mississippi, the Des Moines River is joined by the Raccoon River. The broad river valleys form a fork which is hedged on all three sides by glacial plateaus some 900 feet above sea level (Figure 1¹). Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny of the United States Dragoons, who visited the site in the summer of 1835, described the land adjacent to the fork as a narrow prairie and the surrounding plateaus as being covered with "a great abundance of timber, Oak, Walnut, Elm, Ash, Linn and Cottonwood, which would answer for building and firewood."²

The natural advantages of this location, the site of the future city of Des Moines, were such that from a very early date, the area was a popular hunting and camping ground of both the Sioux and Sac and Fox Indian Nations. Indian hunting parties were attracted by the abundance of game and the protection offered by the site. Fur traders were attracted to the area by the presence of the Indians and the indispensable convenience of the navigable river, a ready means of transport on which to move their furs to market.

During the Spanish regime in the Mississippi Valley (1763-1800), English traders from the Mackinac region of the Great Lakes annoyed

¹ All figures referred to in this study appear in Appendix A.

² Johnson Brigham, Des Moines the Pioneer of Municipal Progress and Reform of the Middle West, Together with the History of Polk County,

Spanish officials in St. Louis by infiltrating the Des Moines Valley to trade without licenses. Spanish law held that trading licenses were to be sold by competitive bidding, and then only to Spanish citizens. Yet Spanish authorities lacked the power necessary to close the mouth of the Des Moines, let alone police its length to keep out unauthorized traders who journeyed overland from the east, transacted their business in a few weeks, and then were gone.¹

One of the few traders who established a semblance of a year-round residence in the area was Jean Baptiste Faribault. In 1800, after displaying great tact at Kankakee in the Illinois Country, the North West Fur Company gave him charge of a more important post on the Des Moines River about 200 miles above its mouth. The post was named Redwood. During the four years he remained to trade with the Sioux, Faribault saw no white men but his own assistants. The one exception per year was his annual trip to the mouth of the Des Moines River to deliver furs to an agent of the North West Fur Company.²

During the years 1817-1832, Russell Farnham acted as agent of the American Fur Company in the Sac and Fox Country. He often journeyed to the Raccoon fork of the Des Moines River with his clerk, Daniel Darling. Two of Farnham's employees, David M. Mitchell and Joshua Palen,

Iowa, the Largest, Most Populous and Most Prosperous County in the State of Iowa (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1911), I, 10.

¹ David Lavender, The Fist in the Wilderness (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), p. 37.

² Brigham, p. 5.

frequently wintered up the Des Moines with the Indians. Farnham transported his trading goods from St. Louis to the Indian villages in laboriously poled keelboats.¹

Information on the fur trade in the Des Moines area is sketchy, but the story of the traders' mail is even more nebulous, and must be told in the most general of terms. Fur traders in the Indian country found written communication with the outside world a very difficult chore. The extreme scarcity of fur trade letters written "in the field" can be explained not only by the very few educated men engaged in the work, but by the few opportunities for communication which presented themselves. If the trader or trapper did not chance to encounter a friendly traveler on his way back to civilization, he had to be satisfied with the few times a year a letter could be entrusted to a fellow employee returning to St. Louis, or another Mississippi River settlement, on company business.

Undoubtedly some fur trade letters were deposited in frontier post offices. Yet the only fur trade letter from the Des Moines River Valley known to the author (Figure 2) was carried the entire way to its destination by a company employee, and thus bears no postal markings. The writer of this letter, Russell Farnham, was himself perhaps the most celebrated courier in the annals of the fur trade. In 1814, he set out from Astoria (present-day Oregon), carrying a dispatch to John Jacob Astor regarding the forced sale of that post to the British North West Company. Farnham delivered the message two years later,

¹ For a general discussion of Farnham's activities see Lavender, Fist in the Wilderness.

after having caught a ship to the Kamchatka Peninsula of eastern Siberia, walking across most of Russia and eastern Europe, and finally boarding an American-bound ship at Copenhagen! Details of his Siberian passage are unknown, except that at one point he was forced to eat the tops of his boots to escape starvation.¹

Although the land that now comprises the state of Iowa was included in the Territory of Missouri created in 1812, this part was left unorganized upon Missouri's admission to the Union in 1821. Hunters, traders, and trappers roamed across the area at will. In some instances, cabins were built and trading centers established, but settlement could not legally begin until matters were adjusted with the Indians.

During the Jacksonian Era, a definite plan evolved for accomplishing this "adjustment," for wrestling the virgin land from the Indians. Land-hungry whites first encroached on Indian land, Indian tempers flared, and scattered incidents of violence (and sometimes all-out warfare) occurred. Officials in Washington were besieged by indignant appeals to rid the frontier of the "savage Indian menace," and the Indians were finally browbeaten into ceding their land and removing west as the only hope for their survival as a tribe.²

In the Iowa Country, the first step in this process was the

¹ Ibid., p. 218.

² For a detailed study of the subject see Michael Paul Rogin, Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the American Indian (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975).

encroachment of lawless Fever River District lead miners on the Illinois villages of the Sac and Fox, which resulted in the Black Hawk War of 1832. At Rock Island, Illinois, in September 1832, the Sac and Fox ceded a fifty-mile wide strip of their Iowa land along the west bank of the Mississippi. Chief Keokuk's loyalty to the United States during the Black Hawk War was rewarded by setting aside four hundred square miles astride the Iowa River, within the ceded area of the Iowa Country, for him and his band.

The Sac and Fox cession of 1832 failed to satisfy white demands for land in the Iowa Country. In 1836 and 1837, Keokuk was persuaded to sell additional portions of his tribe's land. Finally, on October 11, 1842, Keokuk and his Sac and Fox band agreed to sell their remaining ten million acres of land, provided that they be allowed to remain on the western portion of the ceded land for three more years. The government protested the delayed removal, but acquiesced to the Indian demand. A temporary boundary line dividing the eastern and western portions of the new purchase was established (Figure 3). White settlers were to be kept from the western side of the line until the removal of the Indians on October 11, 1845. In agreeing to this plan, the government unwittingly set in motion the forces that eventually brought about the foundation of the city of Des Moines, and the establishment of the first real semblance of postal service in central Iowa.

The United States government felt a moral responsibility to protect the Sac and Fox during their three-year interlude on the western portion of their ceded land, not only from white encroachment, but

from unethical traders and the Indians' northern enemy, the Sioux. This protection was provided in the form of a military post. Erected at the junction of the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers in the spring and summer of 1843 (Figure 4), the post was garrisoned by Company I of the First U.S. Dragoons and Company F of the First U.S. Infantry.

On May 10, 1843, the commandant of the new post, Captain James Allen of the First Dragoons, reported to the War Department that due to the great notoriety that the location enjoyed under designations such as Raccoon River, Raccoon Forks, Raccoon, and The Raccoon, he had concluded to name the new post "Fort Raccoon."¹ In Washington, Adjutant General Roger Jones frowned upon Allen's choice of title, endorsing the report: "Fort Iowa would be a very good name, but Raccoon would be shocking; at least in very bad taste."² General Winfield Scott agreed with Jones' view. Scott directed Allen to call the post Fort Des Moines.³ Allen rejoined:

I am afraid that the latter designation for the post will divert much of our mails and supplies to the late post of this name on the Mississippi, the recollection of which is yet in the minds of many of the postmasters and public carriers. I know that at Fort Atkinson, last year, most of my letters and papers came to me by the way of the old post of that name in Wisconsin.⁴

¹ "Fort Des Moines, No. 2," Annals of Iowa, 3rd ser., 4, No. 3 (1899), 167-68; The Indian name for the locality was Ase-po-lo, meaning raccoon. The History of Polk County, Iowa (Des Moines: Union Historical Co., 1880), p. 717.

² "Fort Des Moines, No. 2," p. 168.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. Fort Des Moines, No. 1 (1834-1887) was located near the site of present-day Montrose in Lee County, Iowa. Allen's comment re

It has been pointed out that had Captain Allen limited his protesting communication solely to the subject of the naming of the fort, it is probable that his objection would have been sustained, and some new name given the post. But unfortunately for Allen, if providential to the future capital city of Iowa,

he raised a point in that letter regarding the right of the post to "double rations," which at the time was a matter of contest between the War and Treasury Departments, with the result that his letter was buried in some forgotten pigeon hole about the desk of the commanding general, from which it was not extracted until nearly two years afterwards. By that date the lapse of time had carried with it the main objection of Captain Allen, and the name of Des Moines had so long attached to the fort that equal objection would have forbidden a change. To this trifling circumstance, the mislaying of a document, the present capital city of Iowa undoubtedly owes its name.¹

Throughout the summer of 1843, Captain Allen's entire command of six officers, one hundred and ten enlisted men, and five civilian carpenters was industriously engaged in building quarters for the garrison. Most buildings were completed by fall. By December, a frame, story-and-a-half Indian agency building had been erected several miles east of the fort. The Sac and Fox agent, John Beach, lived there and called his new station the Raccoon River Agency, to avoid confusion with the old agency downriver which was known as the Sac and Fox Agency.² Also residing near the fort were about twenty civilians

mail misdirected to a Fort Atkinson in Wisconsin is a bit misleading as no military post by that name ever existed in Wisconsin. Allen's mail was undoubtedly missent to the town of Fort Atkinson, Jefferson County, Wisconsin. A post office was established at that place July 5, 1839.

¹ "Fort Des Moines, No. 2," p. 168.

² Letter, John Beach to Iowa Territorial Governor John Chambers,

employed by the army, the Indian agent, and two Indian trading firms.

The career of Fort Des Moines No. 2 proved to be uneventful. No Sioux ventured south into the area to make trouble. Sac and Fox bands roamed freely from the new agency, hunting or visiting their old haunts on the Iowa and Des Moines Rivers. White encroachment presented the most serious problem for Captain Allen; only a moderate degree of success was achieved in keeping whites from squatting on the Indians' land, selling them liquor, and stealing their horses. Captain Allen was himself accused of neglect of duty towards his Indian charges, and was the subject of an army investigation in the fall of 1845.¹

Garrison life at Fort Des Moines No. 2 must have presented a dull prospect for the military man, particularly because of the difficulty in sending and receiving mail. It is not known whether Captain Allen's prediction regarding misdirected mail came true, but both he and his men encountered formidable difficulty communicating even with well-directed letters. In his report of May 10, 1843, Captain Allen advised the War Department that "Fairfield, Iowa Territory, will be my first convenient postoffice, until another shall be established in the new territory just vacated by the Indians."² Although a post

Sept. 4, 1843; Bureau of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, 1824-1881, National Archives, Record Group 75, Series M234, Roll 732 (Hereafter cited as M234).

¹ "Fort Des Moines, No. 2," pp. 172, 177; Adj. Gen. Roger Jones to Col. Stephen W. Kearny, Oct. 8, 1845; M234, Roll 714.

² "Fort Des Moines, No. 2," p. 167.

office was established at Ottumwa on June 19, 1844, and later at Oskaloosa on October 19, 1844, those offices appear to have been virtually ignored, and Fairfield considered the most convenient office during the three-year existence of Fort Des Moines. The fort received mail only by occasionally sending a soldier for it. With Fairfield one hundred miles away, the round trip was a four-day ride in good weather; in bad weather it took as long as two weeks.

Indian agent Beach reported to Iowa Territorial Governor (and Superintendent of Indian Affairs) John Chambers, that the chief inconvenience of his new agency site was the great distance to the post office. Beach warned Washington that his communications would not be forwarded with the same regularity as had been the case at the old Sac and Fox Agency. Beach also experienced what Captain Allen had feared--a miscarrying of his mail to the site of the old agency, twenty miles from Fairfield.¹ Governor Chambers complained to T. Hartley Crawford, U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, that both outgoing and incoming mail at Fort Des Moines was pathetically lacking. Chambers claimed that letters to Captain Allen and agent Beach

cannot reach them in less than from ten to fifteen days, having to go [from Iowa City] by way of Bloomington to Burlington and from thence to Fairfield. . . . In the mean time I shall be harrassed with daily complaints against the Indians, and probably be assailed by the press for neglect of duty, ignorance of Indian character &c.²

¹ Beach to Chambers, Sept. 2, 1844, and Beach to T. Hartley Crawford, Dec. 1, 1843, M234, Roll 714 and 732.

² Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, Dec. 5, 1843, M234, Roll 732.

In 1844, the sutler at Fort Des Moines No. 2, Robert A. Kinzie, applied to the Post Office Department for permission to establish an office at Fort Des Moines, with himself as postmaster.¹ The application was refused, but shortly afterwards a suitable arrangement was made. Indian agent Beach reported that:

By an arrangement between the commandant at the Fort, the Traders, and myself, we despatch an Express weekly. It travels six days of every seven, and is maintained with more regularity than many post routes.²

The "express" was continued for the remainder of the time that a military force was garrisoned at the Raccoon Forks (through February 1846).³ Of the four known letters sent from Fort Des Moines No. 2 three (Figures 5-7) were carried by the "express" to Fairfield, and one (Figure 8) was carried by military courier in the opposite direction, to Fort Leavenworth on the Missouri River. No incoming mail to Fort Des Moines No. 2 is known.

¹ Beach to Chambers, Sept. 2, 1844, M234, Roll 714.

² Ibid.; Thomas ("Uncle Tommy") Mitchell, a civilian living near the fort, seems to have been involved in the operation of the "express," and Josiah Smart, Beach's interpreter, may have acted as the "postmaster" of the operation. L. F. Andrews, Pioneers of Polk County, Iowa and Reminiscences of Early Days (Des Moines: Baker-Trisler Co., 1908), II, 118; Isaac Brandt, "Pioneer Des Moines Postoffices," Annals of Iowa, 3rd ser., 33, No. 4 (1956), 269.

³ In a letter from Fort Des Moines dated Feb. 13, 1846, 1st Lt. William N. Grier referred to the expected return of the express with instructions from 3d Military District Hd. Qrs. in St. Louis (Grier to Lt. R. B. Garnett, M234, Roll 732).

CHAPTER THREE

The Post Office as a Focal Point for Politics and the Booster Spirit on the Urban Frontier

Bernard DeVoto came to call 1846 the "year of decision" for the United States; the same can be said of that year in regard to Des Moines. The spirit of "manifest destiny" which drove the military, the Mormons, and other settlers along the overland routes to the west coast that year, drove families from eastern Iowa communities out onto the prairie roads leading west to Fort Des Moines. In the short fourteen months from October 1845, to December 1846, Fort Des Moines was transformed from a temporary military post in an unorganized portion of Iowa Territory, to the upstart county seat of a fledgling county in the new State of Iowa--a town small in size yet containing all the crude rudiments of a large city.

They Are Coming, announced a Burlington newspaper on October 2, 1845, "our city is crowded with Emigrants from the various states, who are bound for the New Purchase."¹ Soon after the departure of the Sac and Fox, a swarm of speculators and emigrants arrived at the Racoon Forks. They found abundant, rich land awaiting their preemption, but they did not have first choice. Since October 11, 1845, was the official date fixed for the termination of Indian possession of the land, it followed that it was the earliest date on which settlement

¹ Burlington Hawk-Eye, Oct. 2, 1845.

could legally be made. Yet many settlers had previously obtained governmental permission to occupy the land and provide various services to the military post. These individuals had also concluded agreements among themselves so that the most valuable tracts were already considered claims. Then, too, military rules and regulations had been relaxed in the months prior to October 11. Hundreds of men from the outside had been prospecting through the country, making notes of favored locations. As the final day approached, the excitement became intense.¹

Under the law each man, after October 10, could claim any amount of land not exceeding one-half section, or three hundred and twenty acres. After the land had been surveyed and offered for sale at \$1.25 per acre, a man could enter his claim at the appointed United States land office (Iowa City). Scores of men who were interested in parcels of land near the fort had on the evening of October 10, stationed themselves upon these parcels, ready to begin the measurement of their claims as soon as midnight arrived.²

H. B. Turrill, in the first published history of Des Moines (1857), wrote that precisely at midnight (12 a.m., October 11, 1845) the loud report of a musket sounded from the agency house and was answered by other reports in quick succession "from every hill top and in every

¹ H. B. Turrill, Historical Reminiscences of the City of Des Moines (Des Moines: Redhead & Dawson, 1857), p. 16; William Porter, Annals of Polk County, Iowa, and City of Des Moines (Des Moines: George A. Miller Printing Co., 1898), pp. 137-38.

² Turrill, Historical Reminiscences, p. 16.

valley, till the signal was conveyed for miles around."¹ Turrill's description of this magical moment in the birth of Des Moines takes on a romantic and almost mythological aspect:

The moon was slowly sinking in the west, and its beams afforded a feeble and uncertain light, for the measuring of claims, in which so many were engaged. Ere long the landscape was shrouded in darkness, save the wild and fitful glaring of torches, carried by the claim-makers. Before the night had entirely worn away, the rough surveys were finished, and the Indian lands had found new tenants. Throughout the country thousands of acres were laid off in claims before dawn. Settlers rushed in by [the] hundreds, and the region lately so tranquil and silent, felt the impulse of the change, and became vocal with the sounds of industry and enterprise.²

These sounds of industry and enterprise were produced by a new breed of American businessmen, the "upstarts." The first white Americans on the sites of what would later become prosperous Midwestern and Western cities, were transients, men usually in search of mineral wealth, fulfilling contracts to supply government outposts, or perfecting their skill in Indian fleecing. They were in a spot six months or maybe a year, but if they succeeded, they would be somewhere else next year, or the year after. When the transients settled down, they became upstarts:

They had begun to live in the day after tomorrow. They thought of their whole generation and their children, and they lived now, not in movement, but in growth. Their lives depended on their own faith--a willing suspension of disbelief--that they would live forever in this new Rome, new Athens, or new London.³

¹ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

² Ibid., p. 17.

³ Daniel J. Boorstin, The Americans: The National Experience (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 114.

The first need of the would-be town builders at Fort Des Moines was some form of civil government. This they achieved on October 14, 1845, with the formation of a claim club to protect their claims. Captain Allen and eleven other men attached to the military post were members. In January 1846, the new upstarts successfully petitioned the territorial legislature to provide them with county government. The new governmental unit, Polk County, was named in honor of President James K. Polk.¹

On March 10, 1846, the last of the troops stationed at Fort Des Moines marched out. Town boosters then persuaded Congress to authorize the elected officials of Polk County to claim the land occupied by the late military post as a town site. The first term of court began April 2, 1846. By May 1, William A. Scott and his brother John (formerly engaged in the Indian trade at the Forks), were running the first ferry.² When further "maneuvering" convinced territorial commissioners on May 25, 1846, to select Fort Des Moines over several other paper towns as the county seat of Polk County,

the people of the "Fort" gave themselves over to unrestrained manifestations of joy. Log cannons were fired, bonfires burned, and, to add to the festive demonstrations of glee, there was an ample board spread with the choicest delicacies at Col. Tom Baker's, and the best of music, consisting of two fiddles, furnished music for the further entertainment of the happy guests.³

¹ History of Polk County, pp. 425, 664.

² "Fort Des Moines, No. 2," p. 176; U.S., Cong., House Report 590, 29th Cong., 1st Sess. (serial #490); History of Polk County, pp. 415, 572.

³ History of Polk County, p. 427.

The new county commissioners now turned to the task of laying out the town. At a meeting held June 1, 1846, the commissioners issued the following orders:

Ordered, that A. D. Jones, County Surveyor, proceed as soon as practicable to lay off a town at the site selected for the county seat of Polk County.

Ordered, that a notice of sale of lots in Fort Des Moines on the fifteenth day of July, 1846, be published for three successive weeks in the Iowa Capital Reporter at Iowa City, the Burlington Hawkeye [Fig. 9], and the Iowa Democrat at Keosauqua, Iowa. Terms of sale of town lots, one-sixth cash in hand and the balance in three installments, one in six months, one in twelve months, and the balance in eighteen months.¹

A. D. Jones began the survey of the town according to instructions on June 4, 1846, and completed laying out town lots on July 8. Jones, a native of Philadelphia, laid out Fort Des Moines in a regular checker-board pattern (straight streets crossing at right angles) reminiscent of his home town (Figure 10).² A census of the settlement taken July 1, 1846, showed 127 persons, yet the pace of settlement was so swift, that 200 people were on hand to celebrate the Fourth of July. One dollar per couple was paid for the dinner. Major McKay read the Declaration of Independence, toasts were read and cheered, and a dance held that night.³

During the period April-November 1846, the county commissioners

¹ Polk County Commissioners' record books, 1846-52, basement archives, Polk County Court House, Des Moines, Iowa, p. 3 (Hereafter cited as Commissioners' Record Book).

² History of Polk County, pp. 415, 428. For a discussion of the importance of the "Philadelphia Plan" in urban planning see Wade, pp. 27, 314.

³ History of Polk County, pp. 677, 752.

issued grocery licenses to seven individuals, and appointed a sheriff, prosecuting attorney, and election judges. They also levied taxes, and ordered printed stationery (real estate bonds and treasury warrants) for use in county business.¹ These items constitute the only known printed material bearing the territorial designation for Des Moines and Polk County (Figure 11). On October 31, 1846, the board of county commissioners also came to grips with its first urban problem--poverty. On that day it ordered

that a certain pauper child in the town of Fort Des Moines of supposed Swedish parents, who have recently died in said town, be delivered to Samuel Kellogg of Polk County, Iowa.²

The town's first druggist, Dr. F. C. Grimmell, arrived October 15, 1846. He had left Perry County, Ohio, with a buggy and four wagons loaded with his wife and five children, their household goods, and a stock of drugs. No houses were to be had at the Fort, so the Grimmells moved into the old garrison guard house.³

By the fall of 1846, Fort Des Moines also boasted two physicians, five lawyers, a carpenter's shop, wagon maker, cabinet maker, plasterer, bricklayer, a hotel (Capt. Allen's former quarters) and two churches (Methodist and Baptist). In the winter of 1846-47 county clerk Lewis Whitten conducted the community's first school in a garrison cabin on "Coon Row."⁴

¹ Commissioners' Record Book, pp. 2-14.

² Ibid., p. 13.

³ History of Polk County, p. 746.

⁴ J. B. Newhall, A Glimpse of Iowa in 1846; Or, the Emigrant's

On December 28, 1846, Iowa celebrated its passage from a dependent territory to an independent state. At Fort Des Moines, residents had cause to celebrate the progress of their town as well as their new state. The keynote of 1846 at Fort Des Moines had been promotion. Congress had been successfully petitioned to donate a town site, and the territorial commissioners had been sold on the site as the county seat. The next job was the selling of the town to prospective immigrants in the East.

J. B. Newhall's emigrant guide published in 1846 was a great help.¹ It described Polk County as one of the most interesting areas of Iowa Territory, possessing prairies "remarkably fertile and productive," and streams "fringed with narrow belts of timber . . . presenting that park-like appearance, so captivating to the eye of the traveller."² In addressing enterprising capitalists Newhall added:

I know of no interior point presenting more flattering prospects. He [the manufacturer] could, at trifling expense, possess himself of all the advantages that Nature has so lavishing bestowed - water power, bituminous coal, and wood, in abundance. Likewise, the certainty of a home market for some years to come.³

The only thing which the "Fort" lacked in 1846 was a convenient post office. The community secured postal service, but the first office was inconveniently located on the east side of the Des Moines

Guide and State Directory (1846; rpt. Iowa City: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1957), p. 48; History of Polk County, p. 338.

¹ Newhall, A Glimpse of Iowa.

² Ibid., p. 46.

³ Ibid., p. 47.

River, in the midst of settlers who had promoted another paper town as the county seat!

In the fall of 1845, with new settlers pouring into the area, the military and other residents in the area of Fort Des Moines felt that the expense of an extended mail route to the Forks could be justified. A letter was sent to Washington requesting that a post office be established at the Forks with Raccoon River Agency interpreter Josiah Smart as postmaster. Because of the lingering preference of Captain Allen for the popular Indian name for the area, or perhaps because of Mr. Smart's attachment to the name of the just-closed Indian agency, the letter of request asked that the new office be called "Raccoon River."

Post Office Department records show that on December 13, 1845, an office called Raccoon River was established under the jurisdiction of Marion County, Iowa Territory.¹ Postal historians are prone to interpret official establishment dates as signaling the actual start of postal service, when in reality they only represent the date that approval for the new office was given in Washington. The arrival of the first mail at a new office usually came weeks or even months later.

¹ Appointments of Iowa Postmasters, 1838-1865 (microfilm of original manuscript record books of Post Office Dept., National Archives Record Group 28, at Iowa State Dept. of History and Archives). (Hereafter cited as Appointments); Until Polk County was organized (Jan. 17, 1846) the military and early settlers at the Raccoon Forks had come under the civil jurisdiction of Mahaska County (Mar. 1, 1844-Aug. 3, 1845) and Marion County (Aug. 4, 1845-Jan. 16, 1846). LeRoy G. Pratt, The Counties and Courthouses of Iowa (Mason City, Iowa: Klipto Printing & Office Supply Co., 1977), pp. 216, 220, 261.

The first Post Office Department mail route to the Racoon Forks was created by extending Route No. 4552 (Fairfield to Oskaloosa) an extra fifty-five miles up the Des Moines River. This extension was also to service the Lake Prairie (Pella) post office that was established on the same day as the Racoon River office. W. H. Enlow of Birmingham (Van Buren County) carried the new one hundred mile route by horseback once every two weeks for the salary of \$350 a year. Enlow delivered the first incoming mail to the Racoon River post office January 28, 1846, only to find that Josiah Smart has resigned as postmaster!¹

Although Dr. Thomas K. Brooks applied for the vacant position the lack of a qualified officer to handle the mail brought a two-month lapse in service. Washington approval of Dr. Brooks as postmaster was given March 2, 1846, but when Enlow finally reappeared with the mail on April 1, 1846, Brooks had not yet received his commission and there was some question as to who was properly authorized to open the locked mail pouch. Because county surveyor A. D. Jones had once served in the capacity of postmaster, he was solicited to assist in the opening. Inside were found some wet letters and Brooks' bond and commission. Jones swore Brooks into office, and wrote the first two letters which

¹ The information on Route No. 4552 and its arrival at Racoon River, Iowa Territory, is taken from a letter of Arthur Hecht (National Archives specialist in postal records) to the author, Jan. 4, 1977. Hecht cites an unnumbered page of an unnumbered and unpublished manuscript register of mid-western mail routes (1842-1846) on file in Record Group 28, National Archives; Appointments mention Smart's resignation; Smart, with his Fox squaw and two black slave women, left the community. He headed for Missouri, probably with the intention of following the Sac and Fox to Kansas where he could resume his work as

started out the next day. Jones, upstart town builder and speculator par excellence, later laid out the towns of Winterset, Adel, and Council Bluffs in Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska. He also served as the first postmaster at Winterset and Omaha.¹

Dr. Brooks (Figure 12), Des Moines' first functioning postmaster, was welcomed into the Indian reserve in September 1845, to help treat soldiers and civilians afflicted with a sickness that had ravaged the Fort Des Moines area through the summer of 1845. Brooks resided with John Beach at the Racoon River Agency, and upon the closing of the agency in early October 1845, was given control of the building. It was in the Racoon River Agency building (Figure 13) that Brooks carried on the business of Des Moines' first post office. Brooks was well liked, a genial, jolly man whose presence was often more beneficial than his medicine. The mail came once a week (on Wednesday), and the doctor always stayed at home on that day. The mail departed Thursday at six o'clock.²

interpreter at the new agency. Whatever his destination, he was undoubtedly under some pressure to remove his slaves from Iowa Territory, which was soon to enter the Union as a free state. History of Polk County, p. 743.

¹ Appointments; History of Polk County, pp. 734-35; The Omaha Daily Bee, Aug. 31, 1902; The History of Dallas County, Iowa (Des Moines: Union Historical Co., 1879), p. 313. The author knows of several 1848-1849 covers from Montpelier (now Winterset), Iowa, franked by Jones as postmaster.

² John Beach to Gov. Chambers, Sept. 18, 1845, and Oct. 11, 1845, M234, Roll 744; Turrill, p. 23; Andrews, I, 73; History of Polk County, p. 735.

With the creation of Polk County in January 1846, Brooks and his neighbors promoted the agency site as the county seat. They laid out a paper town, one half mile east of the present State capital building, which they called Brooklyn. After failing in its bid for the county seat, the town of Brooklyn was vacated by Act of the First General Assembly of the State of Iowa, approved January 28, 1847, and disappeared from the map.¹ Brooklynites failed in their efforts at town founding, but took pride in having secured Des Moines' first post office.

Between July 1, 1846 and February 5, 1847 (the actual date of its discontinuance) the Raccoon River post office collected \$34.32 in postage. Considering the short, nine-month period of its existence, and its low net proceeds, it is surprising that two covers sent through the office are known (Figures 14 and 15). Their manuscript markings represent the western-most postmark of Iowa Territory.²

The demise of the Raccoon River post office can be attributed to three factors: practicality, east side-west side competition, and politics. The earliest known incoming letter to the town of Fort Des Moines (fall 1846) is routed to "Ft. Des Moines County Seat of Polk County, Raccoon River P.O., Iowa." The writer of the letter,

¹ LeRoy G. Pratt, From Cabin to Capital (Des Moines: Iowa State Dept. of Public Instruction, 1974), p. 35.

² Register of All Officers and Agents (Washington, D.C.: Gideon & Co. Printers, 1847), p. 446. For the story of the finding of the earliest of the Raccoon River covers (Figure 14) see Woodrow W. Westholm, "Postal History Dividends," Iowa Postal History Society Bulletin, No. 6 (Sept. 1954), pp. 7-10.

John L. Robinson of Rushville, Indiana, told his friend that his just-received letter was "a very satisfactory one as it respects the country, &c," but there was one "difficulty about it:"

It is postmarked "Raccoon River," & dated Ft. Des Moines, this would seem to indicate a different name for the Post Office than that of your town. I shall however address this to the County Seat of Polk Co. and presume it will go safe.¹

In most instances the establishment of the first post office in Midwestern cities not only preceded municipal incorporation, but served to legitimize the names of the new communities, names which for local boosters were the very embodiment of the spirit of opportunity represented by their "new Edens"--names which they hoped to indelibly stamp in the minds of prospective immigrants and money lenders in the East. For this reason, as well as the basic desire for communication with friends and relatives, the establishment of a post office was for early settlers a serious matter.

At their second meeting in May 1846, the county commissioners of Polk County had discussed a permanent name to be given the town they were planning. The general locality continued to be known as the Raccoon Forks, and the newly-established post office as Raccoon River, but they did not like the names. They did not feel that either was dignified enough for a town which, because of its central location at the junction of the territory's two major rivers, some already hinted could possibly be the future capital of the state. If they named it

¹ J. L. Robinson to P. M. Casady, September 19, 1846, in a private collection. The author has seen a cover dated as late as March 1847, bearing the confusing address "Ft Des Moines, Raccoon River, Iowa."

Raccoon River it would be called "coontown," and its people "coons." So they decided to stick with the name Fort Des Moines, favoring the larger river, as well as the War Department's earlier desire regarding the naming of the military post.¹

Yet in the fall of 1846 the community's post office continued under the name Raccoon River. Not only that but it remained situated in the old Raccoon River Agency building on the east side of the Des Moines River, more convenient to Dr. Brooks and his Brooklynites than to the settlers at Fort Des Moines. In an effort to remedy this irksome situation newly-arrived lawyer Phineas M. Casady on December 9, 1846, wrote to territorial delegate Augustus Caesar Dodge, requesting him to see if he couldn't get the Post Office Department to change the name of the office to Fort Des Moines, remove it to the west side of the river, and to appoint him (Casady) as postmaster in place of Dr. Brooks.²

Political practice of the day assured Casady of success in his effort. Beginning with Andrew Jackson's appointment of William T. Barry as postmaster general in 1829, the United States Post Office had completely given in to partisan influence. Although nominally chosen by the president or the postmaster general, the postmasters by the mid 1840s were actually selected by members of Congress from each state or territory. Congressmen did all in their power to secure positions for

¹ Andrews, I, 269.

² A. C. Dodge to P. M. Casady, March 3, 1847, Casady Papers, Iowa State Dept. of History and Archives, Des Moines.

friends of their party, men who would use the power of the post office to aid their party's candidates in the next election. This aid was commonly given in the skillful distribution of party literature sent to communities in care of the local postmaster, as well as in the deliberate mishandling of opposition documents.¹ As one historian saw it, the early post offices played a major political role,

frequently serving as the community's first institutionalized connection with state and national politics. Its nationally determined political function as the first source of local patronage made it the center of partisan politics for its district, while the postmaster was frequently the key political figure in his locality.²

At Fort Des Moines Phineas M. Casady was a Jacksonian Democrat, as were most of the west-side voters. Augustus Caesar Dodge, the recipient of Casady's letter, was the acknowledged leader of the Democratic majority in the Territory of Iowa, the man President Polk turned to for recommendations for territorial appointments. On the other hand, Dr. Brooks, the Racoon River postmaster, had revealed himself to be an ardent Whig, actively campaigning for an east-side Whig who ran for surveyor in the first local election of May 1846.³

¹ Don E. Fehrenbacher, "The Post Office in Illinois Politics of the 1850's," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, 46, No. 1 (1953), 60-61, 63-65.

² Daniel J. Elazar, Cities of the Prairie: The Metropolitan Frontier and American Politics (New York: Basic Books, 1970), pp. 379-80.

³ Andrews, I, 74; Louis Pelzer, Augustus Caesar Dodge (Iowa City: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1908), p. 129. In later life Casady would himself be called upon to write a letter recommending that a Whig postmaster be replaced by a Democrat. See James B. Houston

In response to Casady's letter Dodge got Iowa's new Democratic state representatives S. C. Hastings and Shepherd Leffler to join him in a letter recommending that Casady's request be granted. On December 31, 1846, Postmaster General Cave Johnson gave Casady the desired appointment, and on February 5, 1847, Casady executed his bond and took his oath of office (these papers having come to him at the old Racoon River office). Casady would have to wait until April to receive a copy of his official commission (Figure 16), but began performing the duties of his new office the third week of February. On February 10, 1847, M. J. Post, handling mail route no. 4577, left Fairfield, Iowa, carrying the first incoming mail to the Fort Des Moines post office on the west side of the Des Moines River. Mr. Post, on March 1, 1847, billed the government \$6.00 for the extra service of conveying the mail the additional two miles to the west side of the river.¹ The additional \$6.00 allowance was approved for service extending to June 30, 1847. Out of this sum the mail contractor presumably had to pay the Fort Des Moines ferry charge; the rate for crossing a man and horse, as approved by the county commissioners February 1, 1847, was 12 1/2¢ (25¢ for a round trip).²

Phineas M. Casady (Figure 17), the third Des Moines postmaster

to Bernhard Henn, April 1854, a letter which was forwarded to Casady, in Casady Papers.

¹ Dodge to Casady, March 3, 1847; Appointments; U.S., Cong., House Exec. Doc. No. 64, 30th Cong., 1st Sess (serial #521), p. 44

² Commissioners' Record Book, pp. 17-18.

and the only one whose initials (P.M.) so well fitted the position, arrived at the frontier community of Fort Des Moines June 11, 1846. The man who ferried him across the river announced to his friends that he had just delivered the finest dressed dude he had ever seen. "He had on store clothes, a white shirt with a starched bosom and I'll be damned if he did not have his boots blacked in the bargain!"¹

Although dressed in eastern clothes Casady (age 28) was a man of commanding physical stature, one whose common background and knowledge of the law and business hardly left room for ridicule. He grew up on a farm at Connersville, Indiana, and in 1841 was admitted to the Indiana bar. In the early part of May 1846, he had resigned his position as clerk of court of Rush County, Indiana, to start west-- with the idea of settling either in the Platt Purchase on the Missouri River, or on the Mississippi River in the Territory of Iowa. On the steamboat to St. Louis he made the acquaintance of a Colonel Seevers who was headed for Oskaloosa, Iowa Territory, to visit a son. Seevers recommended that Casady pick Iowa as his new home for his friends there had written that the country was beautiful, the land fertile and "everything favorable except settlers were few and far between." Casady decided to have a look at it and accompanied Seevers to Burlington. From Burlington Casady went to Keosauqua to visit an uncle for a few weeks, and then headed up the Des Moines River Valley

¹ Unpublished reminiscences of P. M. Casady in Tacitus Hussey Papers, Iowa State Dept. of History and Archives, Des Moines.

investigating the prospects of each town he came to. At Fort Des Moines, June 11, 1846, he left his belongings at the Tucker House (a small hotel in the cabin formerly occupied by Captain Allen), looked over the place, and was so impressed with the situation that he decided to settle. Sixty years later he was still there, a wealthy man and one of the most conspicuous "landmarks" of the city, having been associated with nearly all the important activities of the city since the day of his arrival.¹

Casady set up the Fort Des Moines post office in his law office in one of the old garrison buildings at Second & Elm Street ("Coon Row"). The mail continued on a weekly schedule, and Casady was very careful of the letters. If he had to go around town on business, he would put the letters in his hat, and if he met a man to whom the letter was addressed he would give it to him, "lifting the post office from his head" in order to find the letters. In this capacity Casady not only acted as postmaster, but as Des Moines' first letter carrier.²

As with most upstart town builders Casady's starting belief was in the interfusing of public and private prosperity. The chief means for promoting this joint prosperity was the booster spirit, the importance of which in drawing and holding a population on the urban

¹ Ibid.; Fragments of unpublished autobiography in Casady Papers; Andrews, I, 27-31.

² Brandt, p. 271; Ilda M. Hammer, "A History of the Des Moines Post Office," Annals of Iowa, 3rd ser., 19, No. 2 (1933), 146. In 1896 at the semi-centennial celebration of Polk County, Judge Casady conducted a reinactment of his out-of-the-hat mail distribution as it

frontier cannot be over-emphasized. And as postmaster Casady represented one of the community's most influential boosters. Equipped with the franking privilege and an intimate knowledge of his community the postmaster was commonly looked upon by non-residents as a ready source for free public information. He acted as a one-man chamber of commerce, answering letters from total strangers who asked detailed questions regarding the population, business conditions, transportation facilities, land prices, etc.¹

Casady answered many letters of inquiry, and even went a step further in the booster process. He took a book stand that he had made in Keosauqua, fitted it up with pigeon holes for the letters, put a pen and inkstand where the public could use it, and "insisted that people should write letters and let the world know where Fort Des Moines was located."² There were, however, limits to Casady's booster spirit. In the summer of 1847, he had urgent business which kept him away from home for some time,

therefore he appointed J. M. Wallace as his deputy. When he returned home he found that Wallace had removed the bookcase, inkstand, etc., into another building in the soldiers' barracks,

had been done a half century before. Semi-Centennial of the Organization of Polk County and Fort Des Moines, Iowa: Held at Union Park, Wednesday, July 8, 1896 (Des Moines: Carter & Hussey, 1896), p. 25.

¹ J. C. Bennett to Ft. Des Moines postmaster, Oct. 7, 1847, in a private collection; James Newberry to Ft. Des Moines postmaster, Feb. 14, 1855, Casady Papers. For an excellent treatment of the booster spirit in nineteenth century America see Boorstin, pp. 113-68.

² Brandt, "Pioneer Des Moines Postoffices," p. 270.

where there were whiskey and all kinds of strong drink kept for sale. The postmaster asked him why he had made the change. He replied with the most innocent and honest look upon his countenance: "I thought it would be no harm to take it where all people had to come." The postmaster thought differently and had his bookcase and inkstand taken back to their proper place.¹

The town of Fort Des Moines presented a rather rough picture in 1847, so much so that it took a bit of imagination to properly "boost" the place in letters to friends. The crude appearance of the group of garrison cabins at the Forks was a shock to settlers just arrived from older, more settled portions of the old Northwest, but the booster spirit was contagious and a few days time was usually sufficient for a healing of spirit, for the transformation in outlook from disappointment to optimism. When Sophia Sherman, the wife of merchant James Sherman, arrived at "the Fort" in the summer of 1847, she found that the place consisted of "no other buildings than those occupied by the soldiers, excepting two."² She wrote a friend that notwithstanding her determination to be brave she couldn't help inwardly comparing the comforts of Iowa with those of Ohio, and confessed that Iowa "weighed in the balance and was found wanting."³ Yet she felt she must not give too poor an opinion of Fort Des Moines for although:

The buildings are all log . . . [they] were all whitewashed within and without by the soldiers and kept by them in excellent order. . . . We have just prairie enough for a pleasant town site. Beyond this we are surrounded by hills with some very good timber,

¹ Ibid., p. 271.

² Sophia Sherman to Mrs. William S. Dart, July 6, 1847, in a private collection.

³ Ibid.

then we have the rivers too, quite near us which adds greatly to the appearance of the place. . . . I find myself speaking almost in a boasting manner about the place, and you would laugh, I know, most heartily, and perhaps be as much disappointed at the looks of everything around us . . . [but] viewing it from a distance it really looks very pretty.¹

Community growth during Casady's term as postmaster was slow, yet it was an important two years for during this time the land encompassed by Polk County was surveyed and brought onto the market. Samuel W. Durham worked diligently from September 6 through November 19, 1847, finishing the subdivision of townships which now make up the city of Des Moines. Durham's original survey notes report that Fort Des Moines was located in an irregular, broken-surfaced area, "interspersed with small groves and thickets, scrubby oaks and hazle bushes . . . not so inviting in appearance."² As to the town itself, however, he noted that it

is a handsome village . . . containing about 200 inhabitants . . . [at] the head of steam boat navigation on the Des Moines . . . [and] may be considered the main commercial point and depot of merchandise for the upper Des Moines River . . . from the activity and enterprise of its cit[i]zens [it] bids fair to increase rapidly in size and importance. It is situated on a dry level plain, surrounded by timber and almost by water, with extensive coal banks and stone quarries in its immediate vicinity.³

It was quite evident to the settlers at Fort Des Moines that a great portion of the land in Polk County was worth considerably more

¹ Ibid.

² History of Polk County, p. 398; Survey Notes compiled as a part of W.P.A. Project No. 4210, manuscript record books, office of Iowa Secretary of State, Des Moines, Vol. 166 (West 5 Mer. Iowa/T. 78-82, RG 24), p. 90 (Hereafter cited as Survey Notes).

³ Survey Notes, 166, p. 90.

than the minimum preemption rate of \$1.25 per acre. In order to protect themselves from being over-bid by out-of-town speculators members of the local claim club met in September 1848 to select an agent to represent them. The agent was sent off to the Iowa City land sales in October 1848, accompanied by a body of armed men instructed to use any means necessary to protect the rights of Polk County settlers. These vigorous measures met with complete success, giving the happy people in and around "the Fort" clear title to their land, at a bargain price, and renewed resolve to build their small town into a prosperous city.¹

The Iowa City land sales did more than legitimize Polk County land claims; they precipitated a general business boom at Fort Des Moines. Merchants were called upon to supply the wants of new settlers arriving to settle on their just-purchased land, and the legal profession found itself faced with a great demand for lawyers who could conduct the middleman/agent business of a host of non-resident land speculators. Postmaster Casady (who had taken a wife in the summer of 1848) was that fall elected to a two-year term as State Senator. It was obvious that his new duties would keep him in Iowa City for months at a time, making it impractical for him to continue his job as postmaster. Still, he was loath to sever all ties to the business advantages the post office (located in his own office) offered his

¹ Turrill, pp. 25-30.

thriving law practice so he convinced his new partner, Robert L. Tidrick (Democrat) to take the office of postmaster.

Casady's post office salary had been meager, yet the many political and business contacts which the office provided served him admirably. In 1847 he was elected school fund commissioner, and his 1848 election as State Senator gave him the representation of an immense district embracing the counties of Polk, Dallas, Jasper, Marion, and all of the unorganized region north and west to the Missouri River. Casady was elected Judge of the Fifth District in 1854, and that same year President Pierce appointed him Receiver of the new land office at Fort Des Moines. The value of Casady's personal real estate holdings jumped from \$300 in 1850, to \$36,000 in 1860.¹

The four covers known to have passed through the Fort Des Moines post office during Casady's tenure as postmaster (Figures 18-21) all bear manuscript markings which are in Casady's hand. The earliest of the covers (Figure 18) is a first trip cover, having left "the Fort" with the first outbound mail! Its manuscript marking, dated February 17, 1847, could very well represent a first day usage of the first Fort Des Moines postmark; perhaps it was the importance of such an occasion which prompted Casady to the unusual addition of the year date.

¹ The net proceeds of the Fort Des Moines post office during Casady's tenure (Feb. 5, 1847 - Dec. 31, 1848) were \$132.13, and Casady's compensation \$98.92, or about \$4.30 a month. Register of All Officers and Agents, 1847, p. 444; Register of All Officers and Agents (Washington, D.C.: Gideon & Co., Printers, 1849), p. 511; Benjamin F.

Robert L. Tidrick (Figure 22) was appointed postmaster October 26, 1848, and served for eight months. He was 23 years old at the time of his appointment; a quiet, unostentatious man, periodically troubled by a delicate constitution. Although not a politician or a place-seeker, he was often selected for positions of trust. He arrived at the Fort in May 1847, newly graduated from an Ohio law school, and immediately opened a private school in one of the log barrack buildings. It was Tidrick who members of the Fort Des Moines claim club chose as their agent to represent them at the Iowa City land sales.¹ Casady's selection of Tidrick as the next postmaster actually represented a political "holding action." His first choice for the office had been his reliable new deputy Hoyt Sherman, but since Sherman was not yet 21 years old a temporary stand-in was needed. Tidrick agreed, with the understanding that Sherman would stay on as his deputy.²

Tidrick's eight-month service in the post office, although the shortest of any Des Moines postmaster, did bring a milestone in the city's postal history. Many times during the long winter of 1848-49, the thoughts of Tidrick and his deputy turned to spring with its promise of warm weather, increased business, and renewed emigration to their town. As a corollary to this expected prosperity, Tidrick

Gue, History of Iowa (New York: The Century History Co., 1903), IV, 44; Robert P. Swierenga, Pioneers and Profits: Land Speculation on the Iowa Frontier (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State Univ. Press, 1968), p. 103.

¹ Andrews, I, 79-83.

² Brandt, pp. 271-72.

and Sherman decided that the image of the post office should be updated. The only visual sign of the town of Fort Des Moines seen by most out-of-towners was the postmark applied to outgoing letters. And a handwritten postmark, after all, projected the image of a crude frontier settlement, not the commercial metropolis of the Des Moines River Valley which was envisioned. What was needed was a bold, handstamped marking. The maker of the resulting 34mm Type 1 postmark is not known, but the irregularities in the spacing suggest either a local or state manufacturer--probably a newspaper printing office at Iowa City, Keosauqua, or one of the Mississippi River towns.¹ The marking is known used during the years 1849-52, and only in bright red. A curious feature of the marking is its uniform clarity; the author has yet to see a poor strike, and there are fifteen known examples (Figures 23, 25-26, 30-33). In their everyday use of the new postmark Tidrick and Sherman apparently remained true to their original intent, utilizing it as yet another means of boosting their young town.

As Casady before him, Tidrick not only used the post office to boost the town but as a stepping stone in the process of boosting his own wealth. The universal "road to riches" of their time and place was land, the buying and speculating in it on a large scale. This quickly became apparent to Casady and Tidrick in their law practice, in the volume of outgoing post office mail addressed to state land offices, and in the numerous letters received from out-of-town strangers

¹ It is not inconceivable that deputy Sherman's early training in the printing trade may have enabled him to make the handstamp himself.

eagerly seeking information on investment prospects in central Iowa farm land. The post office, in other words, while not itself conveying wealth, did point the way to the real source. It also provided a few key ingredients for the playing of the real estate game--a modest salary which helped them to begin their own purchase of virgin prairie tracts, recognition and trust throughout government circles which enabled them to increase their land purchases through the use of credit, and the franking privilege which (under the guise of official business) allowed them to easily communicate with potential customers in the East and to form business alliances with other, out-of-town land agents.

In 1854 Tidrick joined Casady, as Register, in the Fort Des Moines land office, and by 1855 the increase in population and land value had propelled Casady and Tidrick into the banking business which generated even greater capital for their land purchases. By 1860 the two men had joined the ranks of the 118 land agents who had purchased 1,000 or more acres in central Iowa. Casady is credited with entering 6,381 acres and Tidrick 7,954. The value of Tidrick's personal real estate holdings grew from \$1,500 in 1850 to \$25,000 in 1860. In 1857 Tidrick was elected Alderman from the Fourth Ward, and in 1879 was elected Mayor. Clearly, for young men of energy and vision, the office of postmaster could provide a valuable means of advancement to a successful career in both politics and finance.¹

¹ Andrews, I, 82; Swierenga, pp. 54, 103, 115-17, 239-40.

CHAPTER FOUR

Partners in Growth: The Newspaper and the Post Office Under Hoyt Sherman

In the fall of 1850 a group of 18 young ladies, sponsored by the National Board of Popular Education, started west from Hartford, Connecticut, to take teaching positions in various Midwestern towns. As they crossed Lake Erie by steamboat many of the ladies eagerly engaged in conversation with persons who lived near their destinations. But Arozina Perkins, bound for Fort Des Moines, Iowa, confided in her journal that she "saw none who were bound to the distant Fort. And indeed, whenever I spoke of my stopping place, people would open their eyes as tho I were going to the moon."¹

The years 1848-1853 did not bring Fort Des Moines an overnight population explosion, but growth during the six years was steady. From a nucleus of about 200 people in the fall of 1847, the town grew to 655 people by the summer of 1852.² Despite the fact that the community did not achieve general recognition outside the State, it was incorporated, and within the State was rapidly becoming known as one of the most important interior towns. During the period 1848-1853, the community's commercial and social foundation stones for the boom period

¹ Arozina Perkins, Journal, The Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Conn., entry for Oct. 9, 1850.

² The 1852 population figure is taken from Iowa State Journal, July 8, 1852.

of the mid 1850s were laid. Chief among these foundation stones were the newspapers, mills, and new businessmen themselves who arrived with youth, money, and unlimited faith to invest in the town at the Forks.

Typical of the new businessmen who arrived during this period, and who collectively constituted one of the community's greatest assets, was Hoyt Sherman (Figure 24), the younger brother of Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman, and the fifth Des Moines postmaster. He was born in Lancaster County, Ohio, in 1827, and spent his boyhood days learning the printing trade in Mansfield, Ohio. Upon his arrival at Fort Des Moines in May 1848, he entered the office of Thomas McMullen, School Fund Commissioner, then selling school lands granted the state by an Act of Congress. He probably continued his work for McMullen while clerking in the post office for Casady and Tidrick. He also studied law, and in May 1849 was admitted to the bar. On June 26, 1849, Sherman was appointed postmaster, and served for three and a half years before turning his full time interest to real estate and other business ventures. His astute acumen, witnessed by his steady employment, quickly brought him considerable personal success. In 1853 he built a large, brick commercial building known as the Sherman Block, and the next year organized Hoyt Sherman & Company, a successful banking and exchange business.¹ By 1857 (at the age of 30)

¹ Andrews, I, 67-68; Brigham, II, 703.

he could write his brother William Tecumseh that he felt permanently fixed in a city with a very bright future, a city which Sherman expected would, in a few years, rival Columbus, Ohio, or Indianapolis. He boasted of his financial condition to his brothers:

With the rapid increase in value of real estate, my pecuniary prospects have brightened, and . . . I feel little or no care for the future as far as money is concerned. On the contrary having roughed it for the past 8 years I intend hereafter to take life easy.¹

It seems remarkable that at the time of his 1849 appointment as postmaster, Hoyt Sherman was only twenty-one years old. He was the youngest Des Moines postmaster, and one of the most energetic. True to the booster code, he was a community builder in a mushrooming town where personal and public growth, personal and public prosperity intermingled. When the community's first newspaper, the Iowa Star, was established in July 1849, Sherman immediately utilized it as a means of promoting better postal service. He also gave it his full support in every other way, realizing its vital importance in the booster process. A new and sparse population needed to publicize its presence, its needs, and its purposes; this was best done through a public newspaper.² The arrival of newspapers on the urban frontier initiated a new partnership pattern in the booster process. The senior members

¹ Hoyt Sherman to William Tecumseh Sherman, July 25, 1857, William Tecumseh Sherman Papers, University of Notre Dame Archives; Sherman's success in land speculation even eclipsed that of his tutors, Casady and Tidrick. By 1860 he had purchased 22,441 acres in central Iowa. At his death in 1904 he left an estate valued at \$350,000. Swierenga, pp. 117n, 240.

² Boorstin, p. 125.

of this partnership were the merchants and professional people who started needed community business. The junior partners were the newspaper editors and the local Post Office Department personnel; the former published the achievements of the senior partners while the latter sent the word throughout the land. If the company (town) prospered, so did each partner. While the post office provided a vital function in the new process, the arrival of the newspaper transferred the focal point of the booster spirit from the post office to the printing press.

Fort Des Moines real estate agent Barlow Granger started the Iowa Star to take advantage of the great westward migration precipitated by the California gold fever. By using a newspaper to promote a wagon route from Iowa City, through Fort Des Moines, to Traders' Point on the Missouri River, Granger reasoned that business at Fort Des Moines could be greatly expanded. Granger would profit at the other end as well, as he was a fourth partner in a business firm operating a ferry and promoting a town at Traders' Point.¹

The printing equipment for the Star was purchased at Iowa City, and hauled to Fort Des Moines with great difficulty. In the first six-page issue of July 26, 1849, Granger announced that his purpose in publishing the paper was "to promote the interests and develop the resources of the 'Upper Desmoines Republic.'" In the eyes of booster

¹ Curtis Bates to Barlow Granger, June 5, 1849, and H. M. Clark to Granger, Aug. 16 and Sept. 6, 1849, Barlow Granger Papers, Iowa Department of History and Archives, Des Moines.

Barlow Granger, Fort Des Moines was a great metropolis in embryo, and his newspaper just the right hen to hatch the egg. In the second issue Granger admitted that:

Some have thought this a premature movement--establishing a weekly newspaper this far out--and particularly so, to come out with the largest paper in the State. But these doubtful individuals would have their fears removed by a tour through the densely populated neighborhoods of this Valley. Remember this point is the centre of a State nearly as large as all New England, the whole of which is richer than Holland, and more productive than the famed alluvians of the ancient Nile.¹

The persuasiveness of Granger's booster spirit is demonstrated by the advertisements appearing on page three of the first issue of the Star. Included in addition to local ads were the cards of three firms in Oskaloosa, three in Iowa City, two in Fairfield, one in Knoxville, and hotels in Chicago and New York City!

Granger advertised that all California and Oregon emigrants living north of the mouth of the Iowa River should pass through Iowa City, Newton, and then on to Fort Des Moines where "goods and stores of every kind needed can be had on fair terms."² In 1852 the editor of another Fort Des Moines newspaper was still promoting this route with the claim that the route from Iowa City to Council Bluffs via Fort Des Moines was higher and "freer of sloughs [boggy-roads] than any other," and that "the merchants of this place [Fort Des Moines] are making extensive preparations to meet the wants of emigrants."³

¹ Iowa Star, Aug. 24, 1849.

² Ibid., Aug. 31, 1849.

³ Iowa State Journal, Feb. 26, 1852.

The advertisement of Fort Des Moines' convenience as a supply point was successful. One of the first parties of gold seekers to enter Fort Des Moines in the summer of 1849, was escorted out of town by Granger who left them a few miles up the Raccoon River "in a merry mood, satisfied with the route they had taken, and confident of being among the first at their journey's end."¹ By March 29, 1850, the tide of spring emigration began. Alex Scott, the ferry proprietor, reported that he had crossed at least one hundred wagons over the Des Moines River the previous week.² The pace increased in the weeks to come with the road between Iowa City and Fort Des Moines becoming completely lined with white-covered wagons bound for the gold region. The rush peaked in June 1850, when a total of 1,111 teams and 2,930 emigrants were ferried across the river at Fort Des Moines.³ The following year the story of westward migration was repeated on a smaller scale. The ardor of the gold seekers had cooled, but a new interest in the mild climate and agricultural prospects of the west coast assured a continued stimulation of Fort Des Moines' mercantile trade. In May 1851, the Iowa Star reported that "the tide of emigration to Oregon still continues--many wagons have passed here within the last week on their winding way."⁴

¹ Iowa Star, July 26, 1849.

² Ibid., March 29, 1850.

³ Ibid., April 5, 1850; Fort Des Moines Gazette, June 7, 1850.

⁴ Iowa Star, May 8, 1851.

While there are no sales figures to show the increase of retail trade at Fort Des Moines in the period 1849-1853, there can be no doubt that the increase was sizable. Local capital invested in merchandise jumped from \$14,755 in 1849, to \$20,729 in 1851.¹ Newspaper promotion of Fort Des Moines as a supply point for California emigrants stimulated business, but merchants played an equally important role. Benjamin F. Allen, the nephew of Capt. James Allen who had commanded the military post at the Forks, saw the town's potential as a trade center for the farmers in Polk and surrounding counties. He invested several thousand dollars in Jonathan Lyon's general goods store in 1849, and immediately advertised the receipt of a large stock of dry goods "direct from the eastern cities." His advertisement included the claim that "Having lately replenished our stock of Groceries, &c., we are now prepared to offer as general an assortment as any other house west of the Mississipi."² Barlow Granger took the cue, and used the Star to editorialize that the town was never more thriving, or the future more promising:

The hum of business and the sounds of mirth are heard mingling together, and appearances, out doors and in, indicate that while our good citizens are not unmindful of Christmas times, and Christmas frolics, they are still preparing for a prosperous future.

Business of every kind is thriving. The stores are crowded with goods and with customers, the shops are filled with work, the lawyers are doing a fair business, and the Doctors are living on hope.³

¹ Iowa State Journal, Sept. 5, 1851.

² Iowa Star, July 26, 1849.

³ Ibid., Dec. 28, 1849.

In January 1850, the editor of the Star once again promoted the idea of business opportunity in his town by pointing out that nine dry goods stores at Fort Des Moines served the farmers of the upper Des Moines River Valley, each with an assortment of clothing, groceries and hardware. In addition to those stores he proudly counted a hardware store, two drugstores, two provision stores, a tinware shop, a bakery, two printing offices, two hotels, a gunsmith, three or four master blacksmiths, six or eight builders, about the same number of plasterers and bricklayers, a harness maker, and several shoe shops, cabinet makers, painters and tailor shops. A barber had set up shop by March 1850, and Lampson Sherman, the editor of the Fort Des Moines Gazette, reported that "from the number of whiskerless faces we meet in the streets, is doing a 'strapping' business."¹

B. F. Allen mirrored the community's mercantile growth and enthusiasm. In the fall of 1850 he severed his business partnership with Jonathan Lyon, and set up a much-enlarged store of his own called Allen's Emporium. His talent for competitive business, particularly imaginative advertising, was unlimited. In October 1850, he sent an advertisement to the Gazette claiming that:

The tariff, the gold in California, the cholera, the Whig administration and the Democratic Congress, the abundant crops and the Danish war, have all combined to enable him to lay in a stock of Goods at such rates that he can give BARGAINS before unheard of.²

¹ Ibid., Jan. 25, 1850; Fort Des Moines Gazette, March 15, 1850.

² Fort Des Moines Gazette, Oct. 18, 1850.

Allen was still only twenty-one years old, but he turned his youth and single state of life to advantage, proclaiming that as he was doing business

on his own hook, has no wife to scold nor children to cry in case he breaks, he intends to sell his goods. . . . He invites the whole public to call and see his stock; no charges made for showing his goods . . . and the sight of them is worth more than to see the elephant.¹

The increase in local business attracted new merchants and sparked agitation for improved transportation facilities and mail routes to supply their needs. As early as January 1846, the Territorial Legislature appointed commissioners to lay out a road from Iowa City to Fort Des Moines. In the years 1847-48, the town was also connected with Keokuk by improved downriver roads. Yet prior to 1849, residents of Fort Des Moines seem to have been without stagecoach connection with the rest of the state, and they bitterly complained of the isolationist sentiment imposed by once-a-week mail deliveries.

The gold rush, however, drew increased public attention to Fort Des Moines. On April 1, 1849, Henry Everly, the contractor for Route No. 4577, was authorized to initiate twice-a-week mail service between Oskaloosa and Fort Des Moines. The mail was carried in two-horse coaches, and proceeded from Oskaloosa via Pella, Red Rock, and Tool's Point.² On April 24, 1849, the Post Office Department accepted the bid of S. Swearengen to convey westbound mail in a two-horse coach from

¹ Ibid.

² U.S., Cong., House Exec. Doc. No. 88, 31st Cong., 1st Sess. (serial #580), p. 715.

the Raccoon Forks of the Des Moines River to Council Bluffs on the Missouri River. This service was designated Route No. 4611, and commenced July 23, 1849, on a weekly basis.¹

Passenger and mail service was further improved in September 1849, when Messrs. Stewart & Company launched a semi-weekly line of coaches from Iowa City. In addition, the Post Office Department authorized Henry Everly to run one additional weekly coach on Route No. 4577 from Oskaloosa.² By September 1849, Fort Des Moines was served by eight mail routes, prompting Postmaster Sherman to proudly publish a schedule of arrivals and departures in the Iowa Star (Figure 27).

Although the new routes were decided improvements, the mails were still subject to the existing roads and the vicissitudes of storms and floods. Poor roads delayed and often eliminated essential freight and passenger service, and necessitated mail deliveries by the old method--horse or mule. In February 1851, the editor of the Star reported that bad weather had forced a two or three week suspension in mail delivery between Iowa City and the Fort. "While we are so much in need of additional mail facilities," he said, "it is an outrage upon the rights of the people here, to have the mail stop for weeks at a time."³ The heavy winter snows of 1850-51 precipitated severe flooding in the spring, which further hindered the Iowa City mails.

¹ Ibid., pp. 387, 717.

² Iowa Star, Sept. 14 and 28, 1849.

³ Ibid., Feb. 20, 1851.

Some people along the route were forced to go twenty or thirty miles for their mail.¹ During the height of the spring flood of 1851, a mail contractor narrowly escaped death when his coach was carried away by a rain-swollen stream between Ottumwa and Fort Des Moines. The Fort Des Moines mail was lost as well as one of the stage horses.²

Nor did complaints subside with the flood waters. Residents at Fort Des Moines were angered that the Iowa City mails remained inoperative through the summer and fall of 1851. The editor of the Iowa State Journal was furious; both he and Postmaster Sherman vented their general complaints against the Post Office Department:

It has been six months since the contractors on the route from Iowa City to this place, pretended even to carry the mail. And it is indeed very strange that the Department in Washington, does not correct the evil in the proper way. No interest seems to be taken about the matter--contractors are permitted to indulge in carelessness to their heart's content, but not a word from the department.

There is no regular mail carrier from here into Dallas County, although the contract was let more than a year ago. The mail matter is quite considerable for the several post offices in that county, and the neglect to carry it works a great inconvenience, if not positive injury to the citizens.

Another thing, what has become of all the bids for the Boone County route, advertised for last spring? The postmaster here informs us that he has received no intimation of their fate, although as advertised the contracts were to be let the 1st July last. Complaints are loud and bitter at this total neglect.

We hope the First Assistant P.M. General, whose especial duty it is to attend to these things, will divert his attention for a while at least to the mail arrangements hereabouts.³

¹ Ibid., May 22, 1851.

² Ibid., May 29, 1851.

³ Iowa State Journal, Aug. 15, 1851.

Despite his diligent efforts, even Sherman was reprimanded by the local press. In 1850 the Star railed against mail delays which were attributed to the carelessness of the local post office. Responding to angry subscribers' complaints regarding the late delivery of their papers, the editor (a Democrat) berated Sherman who had recently exhibited signs of a possible switch in party affiliation:

We assure our friends that we are not to blame for this. Our papers . . . have been regularly made up and deposited in the Post Office in time for the mails with but one exception. In making up our issue of the 24th ult., we were half an hour too late for the Winterset and Adel mails; we took, however, occasion to send these papers by private conveyance at the first opportunity. We learn, that some of our papers and letters have lain for weeks in the P.O. here, while others have been sent the wrong way, and never reached their destination. We have confidence in the ability and honesty of the Post Master here, and know that the duties of the office will be performed faithfully, when done by himself; but we were not aware that when he received his appointment, the whole Whig party were appointed also. The handling of the mails is too serious a matter to be trifled with, and those who do so, should at least, be sworn, and have ability sufficient to perform their duties.¹

Sherman retorted that his deputies were sworn to their duties, and future Star complaints were more generally directed. After the receipt of two Iowa City letters which were two weeks in transit (during a period of uninterrupted service) the Star asked "What careless

¹ Iowa Star, June 7, 1850; Although a nominal Democrat at the time of his appointment, Sherman possessed an independent political philosophy. The beginning of his political conversion can be traced to 1850 when local Whigs pledged \$350 to bring his brother Lampson from Cincinnati to establish the Fort Des Moines Gazette. When the Whigs persuaded Sherman to run for Sheriff in 1855 the Democrats were worried. They agreed that Hoyt was a hard man to beat. Andrews, I, 68; Lampson Sherman to William Tecumseh Sherman, July 14, 1850, William Tecumseh Sherman Papers.

or rascally P.M. detained these communications? . . . These acts show something wrong, which should be immediately corrected."¹

Postal matters other than the problem of delayed deliveries filled the newspapers during Postmaster Sherman's tenure. There were notices of unclaimed letters to be advertised, the first of which appeared in the Star of October 12, 1849 (Figure 28). Despite the community's infant size, the lists were exceptionally long, and are best accounted for as letters addressed to transient emigrants.

In April 1851, a man sought for mail theft at Lacon, Illinois, was arrested at Ludlow & Smith's theatre at Fort Des Moines. When apprehended, the man was wearing a heavy pair of false whiskers, and had three different pair of the same, plus \$300 in marked, stolen bills in his possession. At the time of the crime the man was the postmaster at Lacon.² Mail theft and tampering were serious, widespread problems. Star readers were admonished to fold their letters carefully to prevent rifling. Even well-sealed letters could be entered by means of a cork screw, and bank notes and other contents withdrawn.³

Hoyt Sherman's most visible accomplishment as postmaster was the new post office building constructed at Second and Vine in the spring of 1850. It was a sixteen by sixteen foot, one-story frame structure

¹ Iowa Star, June 21, 1850, and Feb. 20, 1851.

² Ibid., May 1, 1851.

³ Iowa State Journal, Aug. 3, 1851.

of native lumber, which even boasted a lock on the door (Figure 29)! The building was regarded as a first class improvement, and Sherman received many compliments for his energy and enterprise. The Gazette called it "commodious and better calculated to accomodate the public than the contracted place heretofore occupied."¹

The new post office was probably more appreciated at Fort Des Moines than it would have been in more established towns for lumber and living quarters remained in great demand throughout the first half-decade of Fort Des Moines' existence. The arrival of each new family placed an additional burden on existing housing. Soon the old garrison buildings were hopelessly overcrowded and some families, unable to obtain lumber, were forced to spend their first weeks living in their wagons. Sophia Sherman, writing in July 1847, said she was pleased with the boarding house that she and her family occupied, "but we are very much crowded, almost every house has a family in each room. However, we are to have a good sawmill shortly and then we will, I trust, live better."²

William H. Meacham erected a mill in 1847, and B. F. Allen started another in the fall of 1848. By the fall of 1849, there were fifteen mills (ten sawmills and five gristmills) operating in Polk County, yet Granger still complained in the Star that "So rapid is the growth of our town, and so numerous the buildings going up, that it is impossible

¹ Fort Des Moines Gazette, May 3, 1850; Brandt, p. 273.

² Sophia Sherman to Mrs. William S. Dart, July 6, 1847, in a private collection.

for the many mills in this vicinity to supply one-half the demand."¹ Granger's comments were more a booster's boast of community growth, calculated to act as an inducement to prospective manufacturers and settlers, than a worried complaint regarding an insoluble problem. At the same time he hinted at a near-at-hand solution by announcing the arrival of the engine and one of the boilers for a new steam mill under construction. The developing solution actually lay in the erection of two steam-powered mills, Dean & Coles, on the east side of the Des Moines River, and Van & Allen's (the second mill financed by B. F. Allen), on the south side of the Raccoon River on a coal bank owned by Charles C. Van.² The erection of the two mills during the winter of 1849-50 was cheered by residents and forcefully pushed by the builders. At the same time that Van & Allen were advertising that they would pay "the highest price" for 13,389 logs "delivered at the point," Granger reported in a gossip note that one of the men employed on the Dean & Coles mill had "taken a sleeping partner." Granger applauded both the marriage and the mill, remarking that "When love and steam are the motive powers, machinery cannot help but move, and we hope the establishment will propel. Lumber and Babies are needed here."³

Fort Des Moines boosters applauded not only the erection of the

¹ History of Polk County, Iowa, pp. 369-70; Iowa Star, Oct. 26, 1849.

² Iowa Star, Oct. 6, 1849; Fort Des Moines Gazette, Jan. 18, 1850.

³ Iowa Star, Oct. 19, 1849 and Jan. 11, 1850.

two mills, but the acquisition of the means wherewith new families could be housed, new businesses established, commerce increased, and the state legislature impressed--to the extent that a decision would eventually be made to locate the state capital at the Fort. Granger visioned not only the state capital, but a grand metropolis approaching the size of successful cities such as Albany, Detroit and St. Louis, where he had worked and dreamed before starting for Iowa. As the vision crystallized, Granger waxed eloquent:

Our town is much interested in the completion of [the] steam mills being erected in our vicinity, and all eyes are anxiously watching their progress. . . . Dean & Cole's is intended for a saw and flouring mill; Van & Allen's will only saw. . . . This mill [Van & Allen's] will commence puffing in a few days, and we shall hail the first strokes of its piston as a happy omen for our town. Messrs. Dean and Cole's will follow shortly, and then will be heard on either side the shrill whistle of the panting engine while our streets will [r]esound with the noise of the hammer and the saw, and broad and deep will be laid the foundation of many a stately edifice. Our town will emerge from infancy to youth, from youth to vigorous manhood, and its "area" will be extended over the beautiful slopes that surround it. Washed on either side by the broad Des Moines and the rapid 'Coon, and girted in by a circle of crescent hills, whose summits are drawn in broad relief against the sky, it will appear to the distant traveler, a brilliant gem upon the bosom of beauty.¹

At a meeting held September 22, 1851, the qualified voters of Fort Des Moines voted 42 to 1 to incorporate their community as "The Town of Fort Des Moines." P. M. Casady, Thompson, Bird, and L. P. Sherman were requested to draft a charter. In reporting this activity, the Dubuque Herald predicted that "henceforth . . . Ft. Des Moines

¹ Ibid., Jan. 18, 1850.

is surely destined to be a place of some note in the future history of Iowa."¹

Others, not imbued with the booster spirit, were not so sure. Miss Arozina Perkins, recently arrived at Fort Des Moines from the East, reported that the mixed population of this strange frontier city of log houses, two taverns, and several stores, were all content in saying "Fort Des Moines will be a great and important place some time; when the railroad gets thro' to the Pacific--and [in her opinion] 'the North and South poles meet.'"² Miss Perkins, who the morning after her arrival in a dusty stagecoach, was taken atop a hill for a view of Fort Des Moines and a lecture on the town's wonderful future, was not impressed with what she found at the Fort. She did, however, admit,

it is a matter of interest, that, [in] this county, where not five years since could be found [only] five white families, and the whole surrounding land was in the possession of the Indians, there is now a population of 5,000--and this little insignificant town numbers 500.³

While sojourners on the western prairie may have seen frontier towns as insignificant, political forces were compelling the Post Office Department to take the opposite view. In 1851 the potential for post office contribution as a partner in the process of urban development on the frontier was greatly enhanced by passage of the "Cheap Postage

¹ Commissioners' Record Book, II, 1848-52, on file at Polk County Court House, entry for Sept. 23, 1851; Iowa Star, Oct. 2 and 16, 1851.

² Perkins, Journal, entry for Feb. 21, 1851.

³ Ibid.

Law." By the Congressional Act of March 3, 1851, the previous rates, of 5¢ (letters going under 300 miles, per 1/2 oz.) and 10¢ (letters going over 300 miles, per 1/2 oz.) were reduced to the following, effective July 1, 1851:

- Up to 3,000 miles, per 1/2 oz., 3¢ (prepaid) 5¢ (collect)
- Over 3,000 miles, per 1/2 oz., 6¢ (prepaid) 10¢ (collect)
- Drop letters, 1¢
- Unsealed circulars
 - 1 oz. or less up to 500 miles, 1¢ (Figure 33)
 - Over 500 miles to 1,500 miles, 2¢
 - Over 1,500 miles to 2,500 miles, 3¢
 - Over 2,500 miles to 3,500 miles, 4¢
 - Over 3,500 miles, 5¢¹

The law not only reduced postage rates but, teamed with the previous rate reduction act of 1845, helped to point the Post Office Department in a new direction. The principle of a self-supporting post office was abandoned in favor of the modern concept of the people's post office performing a vital public service, without regard to cost. Congressmen from western states agreed to vote for the reduced postage rates so long coveted by the East, provided that the West should be guaranteed their post roads regardless of cost.² The price that eastern cities had to pay western towns for the 1851 rate reduction was written into an amendment to the Act of March 3, 1851, which read:

That no post office now in existence shall be discontinued, nor shall the mail service on any mail routes in any of the States or Territories be discontinued or diminished in consequence of any

¹ U.S. Post Office Department, United States Domestic Postage Rates, 1789-1956, POD Publication 15 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1956), pp. 54-55.

² Fuller, pp. 64-65.

diminution of the revenues that may result from this act; and it shall be the duty of the Postmaster General to establish new post offices and place the mail service on any new mail routes established, or that may hereafter be established, in the same manner as though this act had not passed.¹

Iowa Congressmen, now freed from the worry of an unbalanced budget, proceeded to push through the expanded postal service demanded by their constituents. At Fort Des Moines the first evidence of the new policy appeared in October 1851. A proposal to establish a mail route between Fort Des Moines and Boonesboro, rejected the previous winter as being "unnecessary," was accepted. The successful bidder, at a cost of \$275 per year, was E. L. Hinton. His two-horse coach headed north to Boonesboro (Route No. 4727) on a weekly schedule, passing through Saylorville, Montacute, Hopkins Grove, Rapids, and Belle Point.² Alfred Snyder also began once-a-week deliveries to Winterset from Fort Des Moines on Route No. 4690a at the cost of \$130 a year.³

Initial Fort Des Moines press reaction to the 1851 Act was, not surprisingly, directed towards its effect on newspaper circulation. The portion of the law first commented upon was the second section stating:

That all newspapers not exceeding three ounces in weight, sent from the office of publication to actual and bona fide subscribers, shall be charged with postage as follows, to wit: All newspapers

¹ Ibid., p. 65.

² U.S. Cong., House Exec. Doc. No. 56, 32nd Cong., 1st Sess. (serial #643), p. 78; U.S. Cong., House Exec. Doc. No. 62, 32nd Cong., 2nd Sess. (serial #680), p. 745.

³ U.S. Cong., House Exec. Doc. No. 62, p. 744.

published weekly only, shall circulate in the mail free of postage within the county where published, and that the postage . . . for any distance not exceeding fifty miles out of the county where published, shall be five cents per quarter.¹

In May 1851, the Iowa Star reported the effect of the new law, and in July commented that as a result of it "We hope to receive a large addition to our subscription list in this and adjoining counties. Democrats send in your names."² The Iowa State Journal reported on the new postage rates in June, saying:

Every citizen of the county should feel himself bound to take his county paper, especially now that it will be brought almost to his door free of additional expense. Let every man without his county paper take the hint and hasten to subscribe.³

Nearly as pleasing as the reduction in rates was the first appearance of postage stamps for sale at the local post office. Although the first United States postage stamps, the 5¢ Franklin and 10¢ Washington, had been in use since July 1847, only six Iowa towns (Burlington, Dubuque, Fairfield, Farmington, Keokuk, and Mt. Pleasant) received supplies.⁴ The only copies of these stamps seen at Fort Des Moines were those occasionally received on incoming mail (Figure 34). The widely disseminated 1847-issue stamps had been so well received by the public that an instant, insatiable demand greeted the new 1851

¹ Carroll Chase, The 3¢ Stamp of the United States 1851-1857 Issue (Springfield, Mass.: Tatham Stamp & Coin Co., 1942), p. 2.

² Iowa Star, July 10, 1851.

³ Iowa State Journal, June 13, 1851.

⁴ Creighton C. Hart, "1847 Covers From Iowa," The Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues, No. 68 (Nov. 1970), pp. 146-47.

Issue upon its July 1, 1851 appearance in the East. Sixty thousand of the 3¢ stamps (bearing a profile bust of Washington) were sold in New York July 1-2, with a limit of one hundred to a person. It was estimated that four million could have been sold had the supplies been adequate.¹ At Fort Des Moines Postmaster Sherman submitted an order for the new stamps, but held out little hope for their early arrival. As the Iowa State Journal reported in July:

The Post Office stamps have not yet reached us, and it is quite uncertain when they will, for we notice by the eastern papers that although four hundred thousand are struck off every day, the demand is far ahead of the supply. The eastern cities have not began to be fully supplied.²

While known used from Chicago July 1, and from St. Louis July 2, the new 3¢ stamp did not begin to make its way to Iowa post offices until late July and August. The first Iowa town receiving a supply was Dubuque on July 28, followed by Iowa City August 4, Muscatine August 6, and Burlington, Keokuk, Keosauqua, and Marion on August 7. The eighth Iowa town to receive the new stamps was Fort Des Moines. On August 14, 1851, Postmaster Sherman placed on sale three thousand 3¢ and five hundred 1¢ stamps.³ The August 22, 1851, issue of the

¹ Chase, The 3¢ Stamp of the United States 1851-1857 Issue, p. 11.

² Iowa State Journal, July 5, 1851.

³ U.S., Post Office Dept., Office of Third Assistant Postmaster General, Division of Stamps, Manuscript, Record Book of Stamp Shipments to Postmasters, 1847-1853. National Archives Record Group 28 (Hereafter cited as Stamp Shipments Book). Although Dubuque, on July 28, was the first Iowa town to receive a supply of the 1851 issue, a cover exists showing a startlingly early, July 4, use of the 3¢ from Iowa City. The stamp on this cover must have been carried in from Chicago via the railroad and stagecoach or up from St. Louis by a steamboat.

Iowa State Journal reported "We are requested by our Post Master to say that he has a lot of stamps on hand and is prepared to supply neighboring offices."

Existing Post Office Department records show that Fort Des Moines received the following shipments of the 1851 Issue:

| <u>Date Received at</u> <u>Fort Des Moines</u> | <u>Total Quantities</u> | |
|---|-------------------------|--------------------|
| | <u>1 cent</u> | <u>3 cent</u> |
| August 14, 1851 | 500 | 3,000 |
| December 11, 1851 | 1,000 | 3,000 |
| April 23, 1852 | | 5,000 |
| October 15, 1852 | 1,000 | 5,000 |
| March 6, 1853 | 1,000 | 5,000 |
| July 6, 1853 | | 5,000 ¹ |

¹ Stamp Shipments Book, pp. 113, 181, 267, 375, 461, 531; It is ironic that although the 3¢ is known used on covers addressed to Fort Des Moines from Oskaloosa Sept. 25, 1851, Keokuk Oct. 23, 1851, and Winterset Nov. 20, 1851, the earliest known use of the 1851 Issue from Fort Des Moines is January 12, 1853 (Figure 35). It is unfortunate that none are known used from Fort Des Moines in 1851 or 1852 for use with the red, Type 1 postmark would have made an attractive cover. And, of course, the lack of such early usage makes it impossible to determine what Sherman's initial thought was regarding the proper method of cancelling the new adhesive stamps (i.e. did he use the town marking, a grid killer, or just pen and ink to obliterate the stamp?). On the other hand, the full array of known 1851-1856 imperforate issue uses from Fort Des Moines is impressive. These include at least two 1¢ covers (Figures 36 and 50), more than thirty-two 3¢ covers, and even an attractive example of the elusive 10¢ used to Canada (Figure 37). By the time of the earliest known Fort Des Moines usage of the 1851 Issue, the red, Type 1 postmark had been replaced by the black, Type 2 town marking, and an attractive handstamped "3" was being employed as the killer (see postmark charts, Appendix B). The fifteen known uses of the handstamped "3" (including use on a pair of #11 on cover) all occur during the relatively short period of Jan.-April 1853, and all show the "3" almost perfectly centered on the stamp. Because of such circumstance the "3" is thought to be a precancel marking (the result of the postmaster, for convenience sake, so cancelling an entire sheet of stamps before placing it on sale). For more on the "3" see "Pre-cancelled (?) '3' of Fort Des Moines, Iowa," The Chronicle of the U.S. Classic Postal Issues,

The arrival of adhesive postage stamps at the Fort Des Moines post office generated considerable public interest, but could not improve either the delivery or the content of the mail processed at that western office. In March 1852, floating ice in the yet unbridged Des Moines River prevented the mails from being brought across for three or four days, and when the eastern mail was delivered the Star editor complained that the letters "were decidedly barren of interesting news."¹

Nor did postage stamps make letter writing any more popular as evidenced by an increase in the volume of mail passing through the local post office. On July 26, 1852, Postmaster Sherman reported to the Journal that for the year ending June 30, 1852, his office had transacted the following business:

No. 56 (1967), pp. 96-97. The manufacturer of the Type 2 postmark is unknown but may have been Edmond S. Zevely of Pleasant Grove, Maryland. In the fall of 1851 the Iowa Star published three of Zevely's advertisements for post office cancellation stamps. If Postmaster Sherman did not place an order with Zevely, at least the Iowa Star editor derived benefit from the advertisements. Zevely's Iowa Star advertisement of Sept. 25, 1851 promised that "Any editor publishing the above (with this notice) three times, and send[ing] a copy of the paper, shall receive credit for ten dollars in wood letter, or a ten dollar proof press - or if preferred[,] a wood engraving, or an engraved newspaper head, of the above value will be forwarded." Zevely's activities are detailed by Edwin Mayer, in "E. S. Zevely, Postmaster of Pleasant Grove, Alleghany County, Maryland." The Postal History Journal, No. 1 (1957), pp. 45-54, No. 2 (1958), pp. 25-28, and No. 5 (1960), pp. 48-52.

¹ Iowa Star, March 25, 1852.

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Whole no. of letters which passed through this office during the year | 26,670 |
| No. of unpaid letters received | 5,837 |
| No. of letters paid distributed rec'd. | 3,216 |
| No. of letters paid by stamps | 1,631 |
| No. of letters paid by money | 1,037 |
| No. of letters paid free (exclusive of printed documents, etc.) | 846 |
| | 14,105 |
| No. of newspapers and pamphlets received for subscribers | 12,518 |
| No. newspaper exchanges | 3,547 |
| Whole no. newspapers, etc. rec'd. | 17,665 |
| No. of mails received at, made up, and despatched from the office during the year estimated at | 647 ¹ |

The breakdown looks impressive, but the dollar amount of Sherman's returns for the period July 1, 1851, to June 30, 1852, amounted to only \$477.17 compared to \$607.98 for the previous year. In fact, the amount of money collected in 1851-52 was only \$7.62 more than that collected in 1849-50.²

Local interest in postage stamps was, however, indicated by a provincial joke which evolved regarding their sale. The story, as told by the Star editor, was that a rather uppity gentleman from Muscatine had stepped into the Fort Des Moines post office to ask the price of the new stamps,

¹ Iowa State Journal, July 29, 1852.

² History of Polk County, p. 735. The reduction in the net proceeds of the Fort Des Moines post office in the 1851-1852 reporting year was probably due to the decline in the number of California emigrant parties passing through town plus the 1849-1852 establishment of other small Polk County post offices (Apple Grove, Carlisle, Freeland, Green Bush, Harvey's Point, Hopkins' Grove, Montacute, Saylorville, Summerset and Three Rivers) which drew farm business away from the Fort Des Moines office.

and being informed that they were three cents each, remarked with peculiar emphasis, "that's too much" they are only two cents in Muscatine. The Post Master being inexorable in his exorbitant price, the Muscatine Gentleman after some hesitancy came to the conclusion to take two, which he paid for, and then turned around and walked out of the office, grumbling at the extortionate price of everything so far from market.¹

¹ Iowa Star, February 3, 1853.

CHAPTER FIVE

Growing Pains, 1853-1860

On February 11, 1853, control of the Fort Des Moines post office was transferred to Wesley Redhead, a 27-year-old businessman whose career epitomized the classical Horatio Alger success story. Redhead (Figure 38) was born in 1825, in Northumberland, England. In 1829 he emigrated with his parents to Canada. When a cholera epidemic orphaned him in 1831, Redhead and a brother went to live with an uncle in Cincinnati. There he entered upon an apprenticeship in a print shop and sold newspapers until being sent to live with an older brother in Vermont. Young Wesley was so dissatisfied at his brother's home that he ran away, heading westward to work as a driver on the Erie Canal, a farm laborer, dipper boy, cabin boy on a Mississippi steamboat, office boy for the Iowa Capital Reporter at Iowa City, Iowa Territory, cording machine operator at Anamosa, and finally, as a tailor at Iowa City. In 1851, he moved to Fort Des Moines and opened his own tailor shop. By early 1853, he was so respected by the community that he was recommended for, and appointed to the position of postmaster. Later he opened a bookstore and publishing house, organized a coal company, engaged in the banking business, and served on the city council and in the state legislature.¹

Redhead maintained the post office in the Sherman building a short

¹ Brigham, Des Moines, II, 908-12.

time, and then moved it across the street to his tailor shop (later book store). It remained there until November 1856, when he moved it "up town" to Sherman's new brick block (Figure 39) on the corner of Third and Court Avenue.¹ Redhead's post office tenure covered an unprecedented eight years of urban growth, a meteoric period resembling Redhead's own climb in financial and social status. Fort Des Moines was incorporated as a town January 18, 1853, and its population jumped from 832 in 1854, to 3,830 in August 1856, an increase of 460 percent!² The principal factors responsible for this growth were the opening of a United States land office on January 31, 1853, the 1855 decision of the State legislature to remove the capital from Iowa City to Fort Des Moines, and the realization of pioneer businessmen's dream of the "Fort" evolving into the commercial and cultural supply point for a host of new Des Moines River Valley towns to the north and west of the Raccoon Forks.

For the first three years of its existence, 1846-49, Fort Des Moines was a "spearhead of the frontier," a small island of civilization deep in unsettled territory. Its population was not composed of Turnerian runaways from civilization skulking in the forests, forever seeking a return to primitive conditions. Rather, it was composed of men of capital and enterprise who were drawn to the Forks by the promise of commercial gain which would ensue as their settlement grew to be the

¹ Brandt, p. 273.

² Historical and Comparative Census of Iowa, 1836-1880 (Des Moines: G. Roberts, 1883), p. 567.

center of economic activity for the whole region.¹ To the west, the town of Penoach (Adel) was established in 1847, and Montpelier (Winterset) in 1848, but realization of the dream seemed slow in coming. As late as 1850, there were only a few cabins along the Des Moines River between Fort Des Moines and the Minnesota Territory line to the north. In the beginning, merchants and professional men at Fort Des Moines subsisted on a small volume of local business plus the modest trade of regional farmers, who would come in the fall to purchase their goods.

The west coast emigration of the early 1850s, coupled with a period of phenomenal national growth and the public's insatiable demand for inexpensive farm land, soon changed all this. California parties were struck by the richness of central Iowa land, mentioned it in letters to friends, and often returned themselves.² Each spring the tide

¹ John Francis McDermott, in his book The Frontier Re-examined (Urbana: Univ. of Ill. Press, 1967), pp. 1-13, does an excellent job of refuting the accuracy of Frederick Jackson Turner's famous frontier thesis as it applies to central Mississippi valley towns. He points out that most towns "arose before the phalanx of ax bearers spread over the land," and that from the beginning their focus was on business and the enjoyment of the luxuries of life "on the very threshold of the savage world." Ibid., pp. 2-3; The postal service, the bearer of one of the first amenities of life to frontier towns, must also be viewed as anti-Turnerian. One historian also describes the postal service as anti-Turnerian because, as practical as it was, it was notoriously unreceptive to frontier ingenuity (private express service) as a means of speeding up communication. Carl H. Scheele, "The Burden of the Far West: U.S. Mails and Turner Thesis," American Philatelist, 85 (1971) 597-604.

² The Fort Des Moines Gazette, Feb. 8, 1850, said it nicely: "There is gold enough in Iowa if we only dig for it--the soil is full of the precious stuff [in the form of profits to be made from farming and land

of emigration up the Des Moines River valley increased, and each summer and fall during the early and mid-1850s seemed to bring news of the birth of a new town: Boonesborough (1851), Homer (1853), Fort Dodge (1854), Webster City (1855), Algona (1856), and Jefferson (1857). Until the arrival of railroads in central Iowa immediately following the Civil War, these towns looked south to Fort Des Moines as their most convenient supply point. By 1853, Fort Des Moines had evolved from a frontier town to a large commercial town, destined for city status as a supply depot for a large hinterland.

A rapidly increasing population at Fort Des Moines also created a large home market and strong demand for the amenities of life. As early as 1850, an itinerant photographer named Kelly stopped at the Forks, advertising "improved daguerreotypes" as well as "instructions given in the art, and everything used in the business."¹ Photographers J. H. Mauzy and a Mr. Swan stopped over in 1852-53. And in 1856, G. L. Reynolds, who once had the experience of photographing Henry Clay, established the town's first permanent photography shop in the Exchange Block, where he offered a large stock of cases and locketts of the latest styles.²

speculation] . . . not one in a hundred will return (from California) with a greater fortune than they would have possessed had they staid at home."

¹ Fort Des Moines Gazette, Aug. 23, 1850.

² Iowa Star, May 6, 1852 and Jan. 13, 1853; Iowa State Journal, July 26, 1857; J. M. Dixon, Centennial History of Polk County, Iowa (Des Moines: State Register, 1876), p. 289.

For the ladies, Griffith & Co. advertised "a large and splendid assortment of Queensware and chinaware of every variety, style, and pattern."¹ With the men in mind, the Star praised W. W. Moore & Co.'s drug store as the place for tobacco; "to those fond of the 'weed' we would say drop in and take a 'social smoke' and occasionally a 'chaw,' for their cigars and tobacco are of a superior quality."² In 1852, citizens could cool off during hot weather at Lamoreaux's soda and ice cream saloon. And by 1857, S. Bitting was furnishing ice cream, iced jelly, lemonade, and soda for parties, balls, and picnics.³

In the realm of entertainment the town offered the Fort Des Moines Lyceum, established in 1851. It met to discuss such topics as the natural abilities of man, the instruction of representatives, capital punishment, public lands, woman suffrage, and the regulation of spiritous liquor. There were also serenades by the Fort Des Moines band, wolf and elk hunts, ladies' fairs, phrenology and clairvoyance lectures, the exhibition of Moore's South American birds at the Savery House, and a billiard parlor which proved an irresistible magnet to many.⁴ One such fellow noted on February 1, 1856:

Spent the evening again at the Billiard Table, to the amt. of [losing] 75 cts. This thing of spending time and money wors[e]

¹ Iowa State Journal, July 11, 1851 and July 26, 1857.

² Iowa Star, Oct. 23, 1851.

³ Iowa Star, July 8, 1852.

⁴ Iowa Star, Oct. 16, 23, Nov. 13, 20, 27, 1851, Dec. 23, 1852, and Feb. 16, 1854; Fort Des Moines Gazette, June 21, 1850; Iowa State Journal, Nov. 6 and Dec. 25, 1851.

than uselessly wont do for me. 'Tis injuring my purse, injuring my health, and will eventually prove my ruin if not abandoned. . . . This is the last night I play Billiards during the month of February at least--so help me common sense.¹

Further diversion was provided by Blair's panorama, Yankee Robinson's show, North's circus, and meetings of the Bible society, the Cricket club, and the Polk County Agricultural Society. In 1854, a Mrs. Ciolina offered lessons on the piano-forte, guitar, harp, and melodian, and by 1857, Professor N. Colson was giving instructions to brass and orchestra bands, and furnishing evening parties with suitable music.²

As early as 1851, a literary association was formed at Des Moines to combat the problem of "the comparatively few books we have here, and the difficulty attendant on getting them."³ Postmaster Redhead also saw the need for a good book outlet. In July 1853, Redhead opened a book store in the post office building where he proposed to "keep a good assortment of school books, stationery, miscellaneous works, and everything appertaining to the book and stationery business, and at the cheapest rates."⁴ Six months later, the postmaster was advertising "The Literary Emporium of the West, at the City Book Store, Post Office building":

¹ Oscar L. Faulkner diary for 1856, Iowa State Dept. of History and Archives, Des Moines.

² Ibid., entries for June 19, 23, and July 3; Iowa Star, Jan. 8, 1852, and March 2, 1854; Iowa State Journal, July 26, 1857.

³ Iowa State Journal, Aug. 29, 1851.

⁴ Iowa Star, Aug. 4, 1853.

Parents, teachers and all persons interested in circulating a pure and sound literature, ennobling in its tendency, and elevating in its character, are most respectfully solicited to call and examine my "Stock of Books" and prices, and to lend me their aid in extending the sale of standard works of real merit.

I solicit your influence and patronage, knowing that you too must feel an interest with me in sustaining an establishment whose influence shall be for good amid the mass of deleterious literature that is now darkening the moral sky of our beautiful Prairie Land.¹

Books advertised for sale by Redhead included Mansfield's The Mexican War, Longstreet's Georgia Scenes, and Fanny Fern's Book. The first of Redhead's books to be reviewed by the local press appears to have been O. H. Smith's Early Indiana Trials and Sketches.²

The book business proved profitable, and Redhead soon entered into a partnership with Charles C. Dawson (Figure 42). Redhead's post office patrons came to appreciate not only the courteous service they received at the delivery window, but the fine assortment of stationery available in the same room. Courtesy of Redhead, and the Post Office Department's introduction of stamped envelopes, the cheap, brown-paper envelopes that flooded the town's mail in the 1850-1854 period (Figures 31-32, 35-36, 43) generally gave way to a higher quality item after 1854 (Figures 41, 44-47). To enable his customers to flaunt their town Redhead even secured stationery which incorporated illustrated city views (Figures 49, 54).

The population and business explosion, which occurred at Fort

¹ Ibid., Jan. 19, 1854.

² Ibid., Aug. 11, 1853, and Jan. 19, 1854; Tri-Weekly Iowa State Journal, March 8, 1858; The Iowa Citizen, March 9, 1858.

Des Moines during the period 1853-1861, afforded local postal service more importance than ever before. Much as his predecessor had discovered, Postmaster Redhead found his first months in office beset by a commercial clamor for improved mail service. In April 1853, the Star editor noted an irregularity in the eastern mail. The "semi-occasional" arrival of the mail, he said, was making land office candidates very nervous.¹ A week later he expanded on the subject:

The mails have been very irregular for several weeks past, and the bad state of the roads is alleged as the cause, but movers, Californians and others are coming and passing every day, and why the mail cannot come when others can, we do not know, unless it is in consequence of everybody else having better horses than the mail carriers. It is no doubt very difficult to make much speed with broken down crippled horses.²

Fortunately for Redhead and his community, these complaints seemed to be the last evidence of a fading frontier era. From mid-1853, the newspapers reveal mostly favorable comments regarding postal service. It is not known whether postal route contractors introduced fresh horses into their Fort Des Moines service, but the Post Office Department continually authorized new routes, and the improvement of old ones. On April 25, 1853, Crow & McConnell were given the go-ahead on Route No. 4690, a bimonthly delivery from Fort Des Moines to Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. And on May 20, 1853, the Council Bluffs mail was increased from one to three deliveries a week. On April 29, 1854, E. S. Alvord was authorized to bring up the Oskaloosa mail six

¹ Iowa Star, April 28, 1853.

² Ibid., May 5, 1853.

times a week, and by September 1854, the same contractor was delivering the Iowa City mail three times a week. By July 1856, Route No. 9485, under contract to J. J. Maddox, connected Fort Des Moines with Sioux City.¹

Equally as important as Post Office Department contracts in updating postal service was an improvement in the state's roads. In 1853, the state roads movement began, in which Fort Des Moines was perhaps the chief beneficiary. Between January 1853, and February 1857, three successive legislatures created state roads which directly connected Fort Des Moines with thirty-eight Iowa counties, as well as the principal cities of northern Missouri and eastern Nebraska.²

One other transportation development in the 1850s strengthened Fort Des Moines' commercial ties, and provided a primitive type of parcel post service--the steamboat. In October 1849, the editor of the Iowa Star first spoke of the need for a steamboat connection with Keokuk which would enable merchants to bring up goods "in much less time, and at much less expense and trouble." The river was high enough throughout the summer of 1849, but mill dams built across the river at Bonaparte, Bentonsport, and Keosauqua prevented the ascendance by steamboats. The citizens of Fort Des Moines campaigned for the removal of these obstructions, petitioned the State Board of Public

¹ U.S. Cong., House Exec. Docs. No. 125, 33rd Cong., 1st Sess. (serial #735), pp. 332, 700; No. 86, 33rd Cong., 2nd Sess. (serial #789), p. 376; No. 122, 34th Cong., 1st Sess. (serial #860), p. 322; No. 83, 34th Cong., 3rd Sess. (serial #907), p. 293.

² Brigham, I, 118.

Works, and threatened to remove the dams by force if appropriate action was not taken.¹ However, it was through the workings of nature that a limited steamboat connection with Fort Des Moines was finally achieved in 1851. Ice swept two of the dams away during the spring thaw of March 1851, and the unprecedented spring flood of May-June 1851, provided a sufficient water level to allow a resolute steamboat captain the possibility of easing his boat over the remaining dam. On May 29, 1851, J. W. Griffith, William T. Marvin, Peter Myers, and Hoyt Sherman started for St. Louis by skiff to engage the use of a steamboat in bringing supplies to merchants at the Fort. They obtained the boat, and loaded it with two hundred tons of freight for Ottumwa and Fort Des Moines, but the boat failed in its efforts to get over the dam at Bentonsport.² A second group of Fort Des Moines merchants, headed by B. F. Allen, left for St. Louis on June 17, 1851 to persuade another steamboat captain to make the attempt. The efforts of these men met with success. On Sunday evening, July 6, 1851, the calm atmosphere of Front Street was broken by the shrill whistle of a steamboat, and the "Caleb Cope," commanded by a Captain Price, tied up at Fort Des Moines' wharf after a four-day trip from Keokuk.³

The Iowa State Journal heralded the event as "the commencement of

¹ Iowa Star, Oct. 19, 1849, and Dec. 5, 1850.

² Ibid., March 6 and May 29, 1851; Iowa State Journal, May 30 and June 13, 1851.

³ Iowa State Journal, June 25 and July 11, 1851; Iowa Star, June 25 and July 10, 1851.

a new era in the history of the Des Moines Republic," an era of increased prosperity and wealth.¹ The "Caleb Cope" and a barge it towed were heavily laden with flour, salt, iron, nails, glass, groceries and drygoods, merchandise which brought \$1,800 in freight fees.² The river trade was not only profitable for steamboat owners, but the newly delivered merchandise provided a further boost to mercantile trade at the Fort. Many firms received via the "Caleb Cope" goods which had previously been too heavy or delicate to transport over rough overland freight routes.

Other steamboats reached Fort Des Moines in the summer of 1851, at least nine boats arrived in 1853 (Figure 40), and in 1859, a "boss year" on the Des Moines River, five boats were counted at the Des Moines landing on a single day.³ There is no record of any Des Moines River steamboats having entered into a government contract to carry mail. Still, any boat could carry mail provided it was turned over to the postmaster (to be charged postage) at the place to which it was directed. Letters relating to boat cargo were exempt from this requirement, and many letters that should have been turned over to postmasters were not. If the steamboat captain or clerk would not accept a package or letter to be delivered direct to an addressee in

¹ Iowa State Journal, June 25, 1851.

² Ibid., July 11, 1851.

³ Brigham, I, 100-02; William J. Petersen, Iowa--The Rivers of Her Valleys (Iowa City: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1941), p. 189.

another river town, it was usually not difficult to find a passenger who would.¹

The confined operational season of steamboats on the Des Moines (spring and summer months only) limited their commercial impact, and the Civil War monopolized them for military purposes until the railroads supplanted them in the mid-1860s. But when in operation they provided a lively element of town life at Fort Des Moines. Evidence of this is found in an 1856 diary entry by Oscar Faulkner:

The Steamer Alice arrived about 11 oclock P.M. Laneraux (the Dept. Sheriff) and Myself heard the whistle and immediately went down to the landing. There was a crowd there in a few minutes. Several of us went onto the boat, where four of the boys commenced playing Euchre for the brandy. I stayed till they got too drunk to play cards, and then came home, fearing they would get into a row.²

As exciting as the erratic Des Moines River steamboat trade was to the business community of Fort Des Moines, it was nothing compared to the excitement attendant to the ultimate coup--the securing of the state capitol! Oyster dinners and large quantities of whiskey distributed at Iowa City enabled Fort Des Moines' backers to push through a legislative act (January 25, 1855) directing that a new seat of government be selected "within two miles of the junction of the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers."³ On April 18, 1856 the locating

¹ Laws and Regulations for the Government of the Post Office Department (1852; rpt., Holland, Mich.: Theron Wierenga, 1980), p. 40, sec. 158-59; John A. Eggen, "Domestic Waterways Name-of-Boat Markings," in American Stampless Cover Catalog, p. 250.

² Oscar Faulkner diary, entry for May 9, 1856.

³ John E. Briggs, "The Removal of the Capital from Iowa City to

commission met at Fort Des Moines to select the actual site for the new capitol building. Speculators on both sides of the Des Moines River offered land and personal bribes to the commissioners. The final selection of an east side site, on land donated by Wilson Alexander Scott, is ascribed to most of the commissioners having property interests on that side.¹ Nor did it hinder matters that one of the commissioners (Stewart Goodrell) was romantically involved with Scott's sister.²

The capitol relocation created an addition to the throng usually found at the land office, real estate values skyrocketed, the population increased 25 percent between March and July 1856, and money was earning 40 percent a year.³ Local hotels were so overcrowded as to create a comical situation. One land speculator writing in the midst of the jargon and joggling of a hotel barroom complained that there was a person to every two square feet of house room:

It is very amusing to a disinterested spectator, to see the scramble after beds, which commences so soon as supper is over; but it is no fun to a man who has no where to go, & is behind hand at supper. The first in bed takes a pre-emption upon it for the night. I've been lucky enough so far to get a sort of

Des Moines," Iowa Journal of History and Politics, 14, No. 1 (1916), 86-87.

¹ Ibid., pp. 88-89.

² Lucinda Scott to Andrew Scott, Oct. 1 and Dec. 3, 1856, Wilson Alexander Scott Papers, Iowa State Dept. of History and Archives, Des Moines.

³ Andrew Jackson Sterrett to B. Innis Sterrett, Jan. 16, 1855, March 18 and July 15, 1856, Andrew Jackson Sterrett Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

⁴ Ibid., March 18, 1856.

bed to sleep upon, but I expect to take a turn one of these nights hanging upon a peg.¹

To fulfill the legal requirement that the capitol building be erected without cost to the state, a Capitol Building Association was organized with a capital stock of fifty thousand dollars.² Work upon a three-story brick structure was begun in the summer of 1856, but builders found it impossible to have the edifice ready for the use of the Sixth General Assembly during the winter of 1856-57.³ Work on the building was, however, continued, as well as preparations of another sort. Community leaders at Fort Des Moines felt it inappropriate that the seat of government, when transferred, should rest at a place that was not even legally designated a city. Consequently they drafted a new charter and sent a delegation to Iowa City to plead that the legislature grant it.⁴

On January 28, 1857, Governor James W. Grimes approved and signed "An Act to incorporate the city of Desmoines, in Polk County." The act was to take effect after its publication at Fort Des Moines and Iowa City, which stipulation was complied with February 16, 1857. Among other things the charter regulated "the rolling of hoops, playing of ball, flying of kites, or any other amusements or practice having a

¹ Ibid., March 18, 1856.

² Deed Record Book "A," 1851-1856, pp. 598-99, Basement Archives, Polk County Courthouse, Des Moines, Iowa.

³ Briggs, p. 90.

⁴ An additional reason for seeking a city charter at this time was that the new state constitution, which was to go into operation in

tendency to annoy persons in the streets or on the side-walks, or to frighten teams and horses."¹ It also prohibited hogs, cattle, horses, and all other animals, from running at large.² Former postmaster Hoyt Sherman, writing to a business associate in late February 1857, told of rain damage to the unfinished state house and of the publication of the new city charter. It was, he said "acted upon by the council . . . and everything started under the new name. The change does not cause much talk--it all being taken as a Matter of course."³

The dropping of the word "Fort" in the community's name did not cause the awkwardness or stir that usually accompanied name changes at other places. The desirability of such a name change had been debated for some time. As early as 1851, the Star editorialized:

"Ft. Des Moines" minus the "Fort" is a very pretty name for a town, and would answer very well for a city. But when "Fort" is prefixed it makes the name too long and bungling and destroys its beauty.⁴

The Journal agreed, declaring:

"Fort" is, to one afar off, always suggestive of Indians and of rudeness; and why not make it Desmoines, all written together and

Sept. 1857, contained a provision which would prohibit the legislature from enacting special laws. Iowa Constitution, 1857, art. III, sec. 30.

¹ Authorized Reprint of the Acts, Resolutions and Memorials Passed at the Regular Session of the Fifth General Assembly, Extra Session of the Fifth General Assembly, and the Regular Session of the Sixth General Assembly of the State of Iowa [1854-57] (Des Moines: Robt. Henderson, 1913), pp. 502, 506.

² Ibid., p. 506.

³ Hoyt Sherman to P. M. Casady, Feb. 20, 1857, Casady Papers.

⁴ Iowa Star, Oct. 23, 1851.

pronounced in English. If written separate, there are and ever will be two modes of pronouncing the name, the French Day Mwoin or Dey Mwan, and the English as by most now.¹

In 1856, one of the two local newspapers, a hotel (the Demoine House), and many citizens had adopted the phonetic spelling.² Even the legislative act setting forth the 1857 city charter used the spelling Desmoines, but it was not adopted. The charter, as published in the local press, separated the word. So did W. R. Wheeler's views, and Bausman & Co.'s large real estate map of the city published in April 1857. Soon "Des Moines" became the standard spelling.

The last use of the name Fort Des Moines seems to have been by the local post office! Postal history abounds with interesting examples of liberal and conservative postmasters either jumping the gun or holding back on the changing of their postmark. Wesley Redhead seems to fall into the conservative camp. By 1857, the Fort Des Moines post office was receiving three and a half tons of mail per week, and at least 38,000 letters every quarter.³ Five hundred newspapers were received weekly, and the Journal praised Postmaster Redhead for

¹ Iowa State Journal, Oct. 30, 1851; While many people have assumed that the name Des Moines is of French derivation (river of the monks), it actually comes from the Moingwena Indians, a subtribe of the Illinois confederacy whom Joliet and Marquette reported as living on the middle reaches of the Des Moines River. "Their French nickname was les Moines (whence the name of the river and city)." Charles Callender, "Illinois," in Handbook of North American Indians, XV (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 680.

² A. J. Sterrett to B. I. Sterrett, Feb. 22, 1856, Andrew Jackson Sterrett Papers.

³ Turrill, p. 99.

outfitting the new 76 ft. by 22 ft. office in the Sherman Block with 576 boxes and 80 drawers:

We were astonished to see the conveniences for the delivery and mailing of matter, as at present arranged. Everything about the office is conducted in a prompt and systematic manner, and the Postmaster is giving his personal attention to the office business. We think we but express the united sentiment of our citizens when we say that Mr. R. is a most excellent officer.¹

But, added the Journal, "it would be well to have the name of our Post Office changed to the new name of our City, as given by the new charter--DES MOINES."²

In the spring of 1857 Redhead did secure a new Type 3 postmark employing a year date (Figure 50), but it used the old name! The rationale behind the Type 3 marking is difficult to understand, unless it was a mistake. Perhaps Redhead ordered a stamp reading "Des Moines," but the manufacturer, seeing "Fort Des Moines" on Redhead's yet unchanged post office stationery, went ahead and used the old name. In any event, in the summer of 1857, Redhead either grew tired of the mistake, or, acting under the pressure of public criticism, cut out the word "Fort." The result was the lopsided marking designated as Type 4 (Figure 51).³

¹ Iowa State Journal, Feb. 21, 1857.

² Ibid.

³ Post Office Department appointment records indicate that the name of the Fort Des Moines post office was changed to Des Moines July 30, 1857; Appointments; It is not known whether Redhead requested the name change, and the request was granted July 30, or if Redhead notified Washington "after the fact," telling them that he had changed the name on that date. Either way, it is reasonable to suppose that

If the number of postmarks used are any indication, 1857 was a very active year for Postmaster Redhead. Not only was he preoccupied with setting up both the post office and his book store in the Sherman Block, but with the many last minute details attending his firm's publication of Turrill's Historical Reminiscences of the City of Des Moines. Apparently the burden of work was so great it affected Redhead's health. In October 1857, the Journal reported:

Our esteemed Postmaster, Wesley Readhead, having been seriously indisposed for some time past, has, we regret to learn, been obliged to start East for medical and hydropathic treatment. He has gone to the well known Water-cure of Dr. T. T. Seeley, near Cleveland, Ohio, and we hope will be speedily restored to health. Meanwhile the Post Office will remain in charge of the gentlemanly clerks, Messrs. Stewart & Rosser.¹

On November 7, 1857, two weeks before Postmaster Redhead's return from Ohio, one of Col. Hooker's Western Stage Company coaches rolled up to the Demoine House after a fast, one day trip from Iowa City. Aboard were state officers preoccupied with the burdensome task of transferring the reigns of state government from the beautiful stone

the Type 4 postmark was first employed on, or shortly after July 30, 1857. 1857 was a year of great flux in Des Moines postal history. Three, and perhaps four, different postmarks were used in succession, but the scarcity of existing covers for the year makes it difficult to assign accurate dates of use (see postmark charts, Appendix B). The discovery of covers mailed in August, or October-December 1857, would allow a more accurate dating of Type 4 and possibly show that Type 5 (Figures 53, 56-57, 62-63, 69) was introduced in late 1857. Also introduced in 1857 were the first perforated postage stamps sold in Des Moines. The 1857 Issue, released on the east coast in late February 1857, probably reached Des Moines in May. The earliest known use from Des Moines is that of the 3¢ (#25) used with Type 3 on May 22, 1857.

¹ Iowa State Journal, Oct. 17, 1857.

capitol building in Iowa City to the plain, unfinished capitol building overlooking the upstart city of Des Moines. The deputy state officers, braving a severe snow storm, followed in a hack the next day. By November 10 the state officers and their deputies had taken charge of their respective offices in the new capitol (Figure 52).¹

But moving the physical equipment and archives of the state government proved more difficult. Men and teams from Des Moines were sent to Iowa City to assist in the removal of four safes, consisting of one each for the secretary of state, the treasurer of state, the auditor of state, and the superintendent of public instruction. The heavy state treasurer's safe was the largest of the four, and in the midst of yet another snow storm it had to be abandoned on the open prairie near Little Four Mile Creek in Polk County. When the storm abated, and the ground froze sufficiently to allow an ox-drawn bobsled to haul the safe into Des Moines,

Its arrival was hailed with great delight, not only by the citizens of Des Moines, but by the state officers and their deputies, for in it was the gold and silver coin that was to pay them their last month's salary.²

Postmaster Redhead returned to Des Moines looking "decidedly

¹ Brigham, I, 148.

² Ibid., pp. 147-48; On Aug. 27, 1857, Alex Scott of Des Moines wrote to Governor Grimes pledging local funds to defray the cost of removing the state government. This pledge was probably fulfilled by the sending of Des Moines teams to haul the furniture and archives. Ida M. Huntington, "Wilson Alexander Scott," Annals of Iowa, 3d ser., 13, No. 4 (1922), 256.

improved in flesh and spirits," and, as might be expected, was immediately asked to use his influence to speed the delivery of the increased volume of mail generated by the recently-arrived state officials.¹

Improvement was particularly desired in the Iowa City route as most state officials had left family, friends, and government business contacts at that place. On November 28, 1857, the following appeal appeared in the local press:

The Republican [Iowa City newspaper] is sound upon the question of a Daily Mail between this place and Iowa City. There should have been a daily service placed upon this route long ago, and now since this city has the capital it is imperatively demanded by the wants of the public generally. This is one of the most important mail routes in the State. The coaches of the Western Stage Company pass over the route daily, and they would carry the mail daily, instead of tri-weekly as it is now, at but a small increase of compensation. This matter should be attended to and that immediately.²

Action on this proposal was soon reported. On December 26, 1857, the Iowa State Journal announced that "through the exertions of our Senator, Hon. G. W. Jones, the much-needed change in the mail service between this place and Iowa City has been made, and we will now have a daily mail."

The newspaper announcement was premature. When Senator Jones notified his constituents that the arrangements had been made, he meant that the Post Office Department had agreed to take bids on the service. It was not until April 24, 1858, that Andrew J. Dull's bid of \$4,900 per annum was accepted. He was to carry the mail from Iowa City to

¹ Iowa State Journal, Nov. 28, 1857.

² Ibid.

Des Moines (125 miles) and back, six times a week. A one-way trip averaged forty hours time, so in order to fulfill his contract Dull must have had at least three coaches in continuous service. The route was designated as No. 10942.¹

The Seventh General Assembly of Iowa convened in the new statehouse January 11, 1858, and three days later Ralph Lowe was inaugurated as the fourth Governor of Iowa. The infusion of the legislative process in Des Moines brought a scene of bustling animation, and a lifting of spirits brought low by the financial depression of the previous year. Congregated in the city were governors, senators, representatives, and candidates for office. Horse-drawn omnibuses thundered along the streets and over the bridges conveying people from the business district to the statehouse and back, a February 22 banquet and ball in Sherman's Hall were planned for the visiting statesmen, and the legislators returned the courtesy March 18 with a gala affair held in the statehouse chambers. The election of Governor Grimes to the United States Senate on January 26, 1858, was followed on the 29th by a supper given by the successful candidate at the Des Moines House. About two hundred legislators, visiting statesmen and townsmen attended.² A toast frequently heard at the many social events of the season was to "Des Moines--The infant capital. May the hand of progress mark her

¹ U. S. Cong., House Exec. Doc. No. 109, 35th Cong., 2nd Sess. (serial #1013), pp. 757-58.

² Brigham, I, 158-62, 167.

onward course, and may she wear with honor the name and position she has assumed."¹

All, however, was not exuberant good cheer. Legislators often complained of the unimproved, muddy bottom which intervened between the foot of Capitol Hill and the river. Passengers were frequently subject to great delays when horses and buggies became stuck in the mud. In particularly wet weather, heavy commercial wagons mired down in the middle of the business district. Complaints were also voiced regarding the condition of sidewalks. The Journal, commenting on the wretched condition of Walnut Street during the rainy season, urged the city fathers to at least construct a plank pathway from the statehouse to the post office.²

For many residents on the east side of the river it was more than a problem of adequate footing to the post office; it was a matter of distance. They wanted their own office! The posted business hours of the Des Moines post office in January 1858, were 8 A.M. to 7 P.M. Monday thru Saturday and Sunday 8-9 A.M. and 3-4 P.M.--quite liberal by today's standards, but many legislators and east side businessmen disliked the one and a half mile round trip required to send or pick up their mail. Consequently in the late winter of 1858 they petitioned the Post Office Department for a separate east-side post office. The result provides a fascinating facet of Des Moines postal history, for

¹ Ibid., p. 162.

² Ibid., pp. 160-61; Iowa State Journal, Dec. 5, 1857.

on May 15, 1858, an office was established under the name East Des Moines with 42-year-old druggist Alexander Shaw as postmaster. Shaw appointed William Lowry, and later George Tichenor, his deputy.¹

Although the exact location of the East Des Moines post office is not known, it is known that the presence of the office was a constant irritant to Postmaster Redhead on the west side of the river. When efforts were made to secure legislative patronage of the East Des Moines post office Redhead politely informed the legislators that his office, at the end of most state mail routes and supplied by through mails, was able to provide better service:

East Des Moines is only a way office, and is supplied by way mails. All Mail matter mailed at that office, for the Southern, or Western part of the State, is subject to a delay of from one to three days, as it has to be sent to this office, and await next regular Mail. Also, all Mail matter sent to a distant part of the State through that office is overhauled at every small office on the route; thus making it subject to delay and loss. If the same were sent through this office it would be sent in a through Brass Lock Bag without being opened until it reached its destination. Another reason is a large amount of letters directed to East Des Moines are sent to this office, through mistake, and have to be marked "Missent," and forwarded to that office, thus making a delay of twenty four hours. I would also state that the State Officers and nearly all the businessmen in the vicinity of East Des Moines do nearly all of their business through this office, and further it will cost the state no more to send and receive letters through this office than East Des Moines. An investigation of the Post Office affairs of this place will satisfy you of the truth of this statement.²

Details of this early east side-west side controversy are unclear,

¹ The Iowa Citizen, Jan. 19, 1858; Appointments; 1856 Iowa State Census, Polk Co.; Andrews, II, 391.

² Wesley Redhead to State Senator Jesse Bowen, Dec. 6, 1859, in a private collection.

but Redhead's letter seems to have produced its desired effect. The East Des Moines post office was discontinued on February 10, 1860.¹ The simple reason given by the Post Office Department for the closure was the inexpediency of continuing two offices in one city.² The existence of the Type 7 and 8 postmarks (Figures 60-61) seems to indicate that the office was continued as a branch of the Des Moines post office.³

Undoubtedly the ill feeling generated by the creation of the East Des Moines post office was a part of the general east-west discord which came to a head in the fall of 1858. Local resentment is certain to arise in cities so fortunate, aesthetically; but so unfortunate politically, as to be divided by a river. In Des Moines such jealousies can be traced all the way back to the 1843-1845 period when the civil authority of Indian agent John Beach, on the east side of the river, was continually challenged by the military authority exercised by Captain James Allen on the west side of the river. Later, west-side settlers were angered by the establishment of the Raccoon River post office on the east side. The situation was further

¹ Appointments.

² Brigham, I, 170.

³ The first postmark employed by the East Des Moines office (Type 6, Figure 55) is one of the most enigmatic markings of nineteenth century Des Moines. The two known examples show enough to conclusively prove it to read EAST DES MOINES but the translation of the logotype, beneath the manuscript day designation, as an 1859 year date is conjectural. Besides the manuscript day designation the marking is easily identified by the lack of a state name at the bottom, and the use of a four letter rather than the usual three-letter month abbreviation.

aggravated in 1856, when under-the-table dealings gave the capitol to the east side, and in 1857, when infuriated east siders learned that the west siders had quietly succeeded in incorporating the two towns together, in opposition to the wishes of a majority of the citizens of East Des Moines.¹

Local newspaper editors chided their readers for frittering away their town's railroad prospects with their "petty quarrels which would disgrace a lot of school-boys." "Shall we agree to separate at once," said the Iowa Statesman, "so that one side shall not clog or impede the progress of the other, or shall we conclude to build up one great town here, irrespective of sides, and commence at once?"² But the spirit of resentment continued. At a mass meeting held September 10, 1858, East Des Moines aldermen complained of extravagant west-side expenditures which imposed heavy taxes on east-side citizens, misinterpretations of the city charter, altered council journal entries, expunged records, and personal admissions by west-side councilmen of injuries perpetrated against the rights and interests of the east side. Resolutions were adopted calling for a peaceable secession from the west side, and several weeks later the floating bridge across the Des Moines was actually disconnected on each side! Luckily, feelings did cool, the bridge was reconnected, and on December 4, 1861, the East Des Moines post office was reestablished.³

¹ Brigham, I, 170.

² Ibid., p. 169.

³ Ibid., pp. 169-70; Appointments. The reopened East Des Moines

The removal of the capitol in the winter of 1857-58 had a pronounced effect on social, political, and postal affairs in Des Moines. The proceedings of the Seventh General Assembly, which labored for seventy-two days (January 11 to March 23, 1858), also affected the rest of the state. An act approved March 20, 1858 incorporated a state bank, another authorized the Governor to raise, arm, and equip a company of mounted men for the defense and protection of the frontier, and a third authorized the Dubuque and Pacific Railroad Company to bridge the Mississippi River at Dubuque.

On the day of adjournment many legislators living in the eastern portion of the state boarded a small steamboat riding the high water at the Des Moines wharf. A little thought had been sufficient to convince them that they could reach their homes easier and quicker by going to Keokuk and up the Mississippi, than by traveling all the way across the state in a mud wagon. Their decision was probably reinforced by the earlier sight of a Ft. Dodge stage arriving at the capital city after a five-days' journey, through "bottomless pits, impassable torrents, interminable mud, and drenching rain!"¹

No matter how much the citizenry of Des Moines exalted over the exciting presence of their new state capitol in 1858-59, nature's rampages invariably dampened their spirits. This was particularly true of Alex Scott, a man who was most influential in the construction of

post office continued in operation until Jan. 11, 1867, when it closed for the final time.

¹ Brigham, I, 160, 167.

the new capital. When the Des Moines River left its banks in the spring of 1859, it collapsed a bridge built by Alex Scott. The remaining pontoon bridge was unstable, causing many citizens to make the river crossing in a skiff from the landing at the Demoine House, west, to the Walker House in East Des Moines. Alex Scott lost \$7,000 in the destruction of his bridge, a loss which forced him to start on a desperate trip towards the Pike's Peak gold fields. Enroute the unfortunate Scott contracted cholera at Ft. Kearney, and died June 23, 1859. Just before his death Scott sorrowfully told his companions that his sole purpose in leaving home was to obtain funds to further develop his beloved Des Moines. In the fall of 1859, Scott's many Des Moines friends had his body returned for burial on capitol hill, ground which Scott had donated to the state in 1856. The site overlooks the Raccoon Forks which the pioneer settler first saw in the spring of 1843 when he came to operate a contract farm for Captain Allen's dragoons.¹

The coming of the Seventh General Assembly, in 1858, was of particular interest in Des Moines as it marked a new era in the city's development and stature. The Eighth General Assembly, which convened January 9, 1860, was remembered for another reason; it conveyed a general political optimism which fast-moving national developments were soon to prove false. "Passion will subside," said Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood in his inaugural address of January 11, 1860,

¹ Ibid., p. 169; Huntington, pp. 259-61.

"reason will resume its sway, and then our southern brethren will discover that they have been deceived and misled as to our feelings and purposes."¹ The slavery question, for years a hotly contested topic in national political debate, quietly entered the realm of Des Moines politics in 1858. In Des Moines, as elsewhere, feelings were divided, with extremists on both sides slowly prodding the peaceful community toward the political and social calamity of 1861.

The vehicle responsible for the emergence of the slavery question in the Des Moines press in 1858 was the controversial Lecompton constitution for the proposed state of Kansas. On September 7, 1857, forty-four delegates with pro-slavery sympathies appeared at Lecompton, Kansas Territory, to draft a constitution for a state government with the goal of securing the admission of Kansas into the Union. Kansas citizens were not allowed to pass on the constitution as a whole; they were given only the privilege of deciding whether, in the future, slaves were to be admitted or kept out. Even if they voted to keep slavery out, slave property already in the territory was to be protected. In protest, free-soilers abstained from voting, and on December 21, 1857, the slavery clause was approved.²

Though the Lecompton constitution was clearly a swindle and a fraud, President Buchanan decided to please the South and urged Congress to admit the state. He defended the action of the Lecompton convention

¹ Brigham, I, 179.

² J. G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1961), pp. 115-16.

and stated that, had the convention submitted the whole constitution to the people, the free-state men, whom he denounced as adherents of a rebellious organization, would "doubtless have voted against it . . . not upon a consideration of [its] merits . . . but simply because they have ever resisted the authority of the government authorized by Congress."¹

Buchanan's decision angered Senator Stephen A. Douglas and his followers, because it violated Douglas' conception of popular sovereignty. Douglas' refusal to bend to Buchanan split the national Democratic party, as well as many state groups (Figure 58). And, of course, the new Republican party happily proceeded to employ the Lecompton fraud to further their own purposes.

In his Des Moines address to the Seventh General Assembly on January 12, 1858, outgoing Republican Governor Grimes (an ardent abolitionist) made it a special point to denounce the action at Lecompton. The following day incoming Republican Governor Lowe spoke to the same subject in his inaugural address, pointing the way to the irrepressible conflict ahead:

This birth-right of the American citizen [free labor] has been seriously menaced, by a growing sentiment in favor of slave labor in one section of the Union. The two cannot exist upon the same soil. The introduction of the one is the disparagement of the other. They are natural and irreconcilable foes. . . . The meeting of these two systems of labor face to face in Kansas, has imparted no little interest in this conflict.²

¹ Ibid., p. 116.

² Benjamin F. Shambaugh, ed., The Messages and Proclamations of

Iowa Democrats generally recoiled at the action of the Lecompton convention. Except for the Dubuque Northwest, every Democratic newspaper in the state was said to support Douglas against Buchanan. Yet Iowa's Democratic senator George W. Jones aligned himself with Buchanan and the South. On February 4, 1858, Jones presented Congress with a joint resolution of the Iowa General Assembly calling for a rejection of the Lecompton Constitution, but he informed the Senate that he did so as a matter of respect to his state, and not because he had the remotest idea of obeying their instructions. He favored the pairing of Kansas and Minnesota as Iowa and Florida had been paired years before in an effort to preserve the balance of sectional power (Figure 59).¹ Jones' stand cost him his job.

Although the Des Moines Iowa State Journal and proadministration Democrats promoted Jones' renomination, the Democratic state caucus was controlled by Douglas Democrats, and on January 25, 1858, selected Benjamin M. Samuels to run against Republican abolitionist James W. Grimes in the fall election. Throughout the 1858 campaign the Journal pleaded for party harmony and blasted the Republican party for sustaining themselves solely through slavery agitation. But when Iowans went to the polls on October 12, 1858, the Republicans triumphed.²

the Governors of Iowa (Iowa City: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1903), II, 130-31.

¹ John Carl Parish, George Wallace Jones (Iowa City: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1912), p. 53.

² Morton M. Rosenberg, Iowa on the Eve of the Civil War: A Decade

George W. Jones, the last Democrat in Congress from Iowa before the Civil War, left Washington in March 1859. Jones, schooled in St. Louis and Lexington, Kentucky, had spent his early years in a slave-holding family, and took slaves with him in 1827 when he first went north from Missouri to lay claim to land in what is now Wisconsin. He knew Jefferson Davis at Lexington and on the northwestern frontier, and shared his view of slavery as well as that of many other Galena and Dubuque lead miners who had come from slave states.¹ But as the years went by the state of Iowa, peopled at first so largely from the South, underwent a change. Jones, however,

did not change . . . and so the State passed him by and discarded him. With Southern tenacity he clung to the principles of his early days and the party of his early devotion until his party became a pathetic fragment of disrupted hopes and his principles made him a Pariah among his fellows.²

Jones' uncomfortable position was similar to that of many Des Moines residents on the eve of the Civil War. The early settlers of Fort Des Moines and the Des Moines River Valley were preponderantly from Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee, but after the heavy influx of eastern settlers in the mid 1850s this southern element became culturally isolated. In 1850 the 106 Fort Des Moines residents born in slave states represented 21 percent of the total population. By 1856 the number of citizens with slave-state origins had grown to 371, but

of Frontier Politics (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1972), pp. 172-78.

¹ Parish, pp. 65-66.

² Ibid., p. 67.

the tide of Yankee emigrants had reduced the Southerners' proportion to the whole to only 10 percent.¹ Southern transportation ties were also being cut. Fort Des Moines, at first commercially tied to St. Louis by the Des Moines and Mississippi Rivers, was by 1858 becoming more strongly attached to the railroad lines running west from Chicago. On the eve of the Civil War Des Moines was a city undergoing cultural and commercial change. Among its inhabitants could be found supporters of each of the philosophical bases dividing the nation.

In commenting on President Buchanan's congressional message of December 1860, the Democratic Iowa State Journal applauded the President's recital of the causes which had led to the ill feelings harbored by the South:

The personal liberty bills of the Northern States--the encouragement given to John Brown and his aiders and abettors--the forcible rescue of slaves from the officers of justice, and the systematic appeals to Northern sectionalism by abolition papers and speakers, are thoroughly exposed and deservedly condemned.²

These editorial comments must have struck a cord of recognition in many readers for Des Moines was at that time serving as one of the way stations of an "underground railway" operation which was smuggling Kansas and Missouri slaves to freedom in Canada. Among the Des Moines men active in this endeavor were John Teesdale (state printer and editor of the Republican Iowa State Register), Isaac Brandt (merchant), and James C. Jordan (state senator). Another young man from Des Moines,

¹ These figures are based on the author's study of the 1850 federal, and 1856 Iowa state census returns.

² Iowa State Journal, Dec. 15, 1860.

Jeremiah G. Anderson, went all the way to Kansas to join the band of the would-be emancipator John Brown.¹

When John Brown and his followers fled Missouri with twelve fugitive slaves in February 1859, they stopped over on the 17th with Jordan, and on the following day with Teesdale. On the 19th Teesdale paid their ferriage across the Des Moines River and sent them on their way to the next stopping place at Grinnell, Iowa.² On another occasion Brown stopped at Isaac Brandt's residence with four Negroes, covered with cornstalks, in his wagon. After refreshments, and discussing the schedule of further stops, they had a parting handshake over the back gate.³

The shock waves following John Brown's ill-fated Harper's Ferry raid of October 1859 soon reached Des Moines. First came word of the fate of Jeremiah Anderson--pierced through by three bayonets in the last assault on the arsenal. Then, on January 23, 1860, agents of Virginia Governor Letcher arrived in Des Moines! One of these men immediately called on Iowa Governor Kirkwood at the State House with a requisition for Barclay Coppoc of Springdale, Iowa, who had escaped the fate of his brother Edwin, and other followers of Brown at Harper's Ferry. After learning that no indictment had been found, Kirkwood argued that Coppoc had not actually been charged with a crime.⁴

¹ Gue, I, 381-82; II, 6-7.

² Ibid., I, 382.

³ Andrews, II, 36.

⁴ Gue, II, 7, 17, 20.

Two prominent members of the legislature, Ed Wright and B. F. Gue (Figure 60), entered the Executive office while the interview was in progress, and later gave the following report:

We found in conference with the Governor a pompous-looking man, who seemed to be greatly excited. Governor Kirkwood was calmly listening to the violent language of this individual, who was swinging his arms wildly in his wrath. The Governor quietly suggested to the stranger that he had supposed he did not want his business made public.

The rude reply was: "I don't care a damn who knows it now, since you have refused to honor the requisition."

The pompous man then proceeded to argue the case with the Governor, and we soon learned that he was an agent from Virginia bearing a requisition from Governor Letcher for the surrender of Barclay Coppoc.

In reply to a remark by the agent that Coppoc might escape before he could get the defect in the requisition cured, the Governor, looking significantly at us, replied: "There is a law under which you can arrest Coppoc and hold him until the requisition is granted," and the Governor reached for the code. We waited to hear no more, but, saying to the Governor that we would call again when he was not engaged and giving him a look that was a response to his own, we walked out.¹

Wright and Gue immediately conferred with antislavery members of the legislature, and they decided to dispatch a messenger to warn Coppoc of the danger. Isaac Brandt chose for the task a small, wiry young man named Williams, and provided him with a fast horse. Williams' mission was successful. He not only alerted Coppoc, but averted a conflict between Coppoc's armed sympathizers at Springdale and an Iowa City posse which had been formed to aid the Virginians. When pro-slavery members of the House heard that the Governor had turned down the requisition on "a mere technicality" they pushed through a resolution of inquiry as to the Governor's knowledge of the message sent to

¹ Ibid., p. 17.

Coppoc. The Governor gave four reasons for refusing to order Coppoc's arrest, and denied any knowledge of the message sent. When Governor Letcher's revised warrant was returned to Des Moines, Coppoc was beyond reach of the law.¹

Des Moines Democrats condemned the outrage of Brown's Harper's Ferry raid. The Journal interpreted Brown's act as a logical product of Republican agitation: "All these things have been encouraged and palliated by the press and orators of a great political party."² The Journal was equally critical of the Coppoc affair, asking whether state officials or private citizens were responsible:

The expenses of the trip amounted to sixty-seven dollars, and the absorbing question is, who defrays them? Who loved his country so well as to assist in spiriting away from the proper authorities a man, who, in cold blood, had murdered the defenceless citizens of another state? . . . is there no manner by which such traitors may be discovered and punished?³

In response to Democratic charges that the Republican Party was threatening the very fabric of the Union, abolitionist editor John Teesdale asked:

Who are the men who avow such sentiments? Has a single Republican declared himself in favor of dissolution? Has a single Republican wasted the time and money of the country, by making long speeches upon immaterial subjects. . . . Have not these disunionists been Democrats without exception? . . . Is the Democratic party the party of the union?⁴

¹ Brigham, I, 181.

² Iowa State Journal, Oct. 29, 1859.

³ Ibid., Feb. 18, 1860.

⁴ Daily Iowa State Register, Jan. 9, 1860.

The political confrontations between the two contending parties came to a head in 1860, the most significant of antebellum presidential years. The Republican state convention assembled in Des Moines January 18, 1860, and elected thirty-three delegates who divided their support among Seward, Lincoln, Bates, Chase, Cameron, and McLean. An acquaintance of Lincoln was present, and conveyed his impression of his prospects (Figures 62, 63). The Democratic convention which met in Des Moines February 22, 1860, was expected to pick a straight Douglas delegation, but encountered stiff opposition from a small but determined group of George W. Jones partisans. The Jones faction was led in part by former Des Moines postmaster Phineas M. Casady, the party's state chairman, who felt that Douglas' pet, popular sovereignty, was a humbug.¹ But anti-administration men prevailed, and Iowa's eight-man contingent to the Charleston convention supported the "Little Giant."

In May the news of the Chicago nomination of Lincoln as the Republican candidate, surprised local Democrats. Speaking for many of them, Will Porter, the editor of the Journal, announced:

It is true and cannot be denied--Abe Lincoln, a man of no culture or refinement, possessing no ability as a statesman,

¹ Rosenberg, pp. 211-12; Casady's support of Jones in Des Moines was so strong that he even influenced the Iowa State Journal to speak out in support of Jones' friend Jefferson Davis. On Feb. 11, 1860, the newspaper declared that "no man has been more wilfully misrepresented in the North . . . [than] Davis . . . the men who have traduced his motives, and misrepresented his uttered sentiments, have not soul enough to comprehend the true devotion to our whole country, which breathes in every line of . . . his latest speeches."

having been in public life but once--as a Congressman--the enunciator of the irrepressible doctrine, has been nominated over Steward, Chase, Bates and McLean . . . [and] If Lincoln is bad, Hamlin is unbearable . . . a cold, calculating traitor to Democracy and its principles.¹

Porter's journalistic campaign to discredit Lincoln soon developed into an all-out effort to show him to be an avowed abolitionist, thus playing upon the anti-Negro race prejudices of native as well as foreign-born residents. Throughout the campaign Porter also attempted to play down party differences. The Journal pointed out that the Republican Party, separated from its fanatical anti-slavery element, differed little in ideology from the Democratic camp. The only real difference dividing the two was the element of time--just when slavery would be abolished in the territories. And, in fact, the Journal considered this question a waste of time:

We look upon the whole slavery question, in the blaze of the year 1860, as a miserable abstraction. With a greater portion of the Territories settled, with their domestic institutions irrevocably fixed, we are engaged in a Quixotic tilt at a windmill . . . slavery . . . [is] governed by isothermal laws and lines. There is no more danger of slavery going into Nebraska, Dacotah, Pembina, Utah, or Jefferson Territory [Colorado], than Siberia or Kamchatka.²

A second Democratic convention met in Des Moines on July 12, 1860, to ratify the national convention's nomination of Douglas and Benjamin Fitzpatrick of Alabama. Des Moines Democrats received the news of Douglas' nomination with delight and the greatest enthusiasm. The "Little Giant," a splendid cannon just cast, as well as thirty-two

¹ Iowa State Journal, May 26, 1860.

² Ibid., May 19, 1860.

other guns, were fired, the reverberations of which were distinctly heard for twenty-three miles.¹ The Journal reported that the ratification meetings around the country,

have been as prevalent as town stakes in a new country, and of the most effective character. . . . The Democracy are aroused, and the weak Lincoln fragment in Des Moines will be as resistless a barrier as a stockade of stubble.²

The Republicans, however, proved to be tough campaigners. They vigorously denied that their party favored equality of the races. And they held a differing view of Lincoln--that he was worthy of support because of his Western origins, his integrity, and his firm support of free labor and free institutions. Although the fall appearance of Douglas at Dubuque, Cedar Rapids, and Iowa City added luster to the Democratic campaign in Iowa, party leaders were privately gloomy as to the final results. Their party still suffered from internal splits, and numerous defections to the Republican cause, the most serious of which had been the Iowa State Reporter of Iowa City, previously one of the state's most influential Democratic newspapers.³

When Des Moines ballots were tallied on November 6, the worst Democratic fears were realized in the following tabulation:

¹ Ibid., June 30, 1860.

² Ibid.

³ Rosenberg, Iowa On the Eve of the Civil War, pp. 215-16, 219-21.

Lincoln, 1,315
 Douglas, 1,263
 Bell, 64
 Breckinridge, 56 ¹

Polk County as a whole put Lincoln ahead by 230 votes, and statewide Lincoln pulled 70,316 votes to Douglas' 55,639.² The overall reaction of Des Moines Democrats to the Republican victory was fear, fear of disunion, and fear of financial disaster which might ensue. In an article entitled "The Wolf at Last," the Journal announced that,

the dread hour of disunion has come, and the crisis which we have endeavored to avert no longer impends. We as firmly believed before the election of Abraham Lincoln that a dissolution of the American Confederacy would follow, as we do now. We uttered our opinion with timidity, because we knew that the old cry of wolf fell unheeded, and that we would be charged by the opposition press with the employment of a mere device for party purposes only. That charge will hardly be made now; or if made, it will be less likely to be believed. The wolf has come at last, and the emissaries of Wm. Lloyd Garrison can see it in DISUNION. . . . We might have written all this before election, but of what avail? What bigot, tottering under the infirmity of his passions, would have withheld his vote for "Freedom" for our warning? "And yet," says some man, not lost to fear if deaf to reason, "must this follow a constitutional act of the North?" We answer that it will, whether it should or should not, and that the North only is to blame. Mark it.³

Mail passing through the Des Moines post office in the summer and fall of 1860 reflected national postal developments as well as the heated political campaign. The small, double-circle postmark employed by so many American cities in the period 1860-1861, was introduced in

¹ Abstracts of Election Returns, 1848-1873, manuscript record book on file in office of Iowa Secretary of State, Des Moines.

² Ibid.

³ Iowa State Journal, Nov. 19, 1860.

Des Moines in the summer of 1860 (Figure 64). Surviving examples of Des Moines' political mail from the summer and fall of 1860 are few. Although Democrats formed a Douglas club in Des Moines as early as December 1859, no Douglas campaign covers are known used from the capital city. A cover does exist (Figure 65) which could be termed a Democratic campaign cover. It is a Lincoln campaign cover altered to proclaim the view of a large segment of the Democratic Party. Probably the best example of Des Moines' postal participation in the 1860 election is a well-executed Lincoln campaign envelope manufactured by Mills Brothers of Des Moines (Figure 66).¹

In Des Moines the political consequence of Lincoln's election was first felt in the post office. In January 1861, the Journal reported that "the cauldron is bubbling fiercely," that John Teesdale (the abolitionist editor of the Iowa State Register) had gone to Springfield, Illinois, to lobby for the position of postmaster "so that when he casts off the official shoes of the State Printership, he may not be

¹ Although no examples of the Mills Brothers' campaign envelope are known used from Des Moines, a good quantity undoubtedly passed through the Des Moines post office. The envelope's known use from Eddyville, Iowa (Aug. 9, 1860), El Dorado, Iowa (Dec. 14, 1860), and Quincy, Iowa (March 1861) proves it was distributed throughout the state. Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Inc., Sales No. 220 (1959), lot 644, No. 238 (1961), lot 355, No. 310 (1967), lot 834; The firm known as Mills & Co. got its start in the fall of 1856 when N. W. ("Web") Mills used his \$600 savings to start a small job printing office in the Gatling Building. Web's brother Frank soon after abandoned his shoe store to join him in the business. The brothers were both energetic and good mixers, and their venture proved so successful that in 1859 they erected their own three-story building near the corner of Third and Court (Figure 67). In 1858 the firm was given a contract for all state binding. Andrews, I, 189-91.

obliged to step upon the cold ground outside of the public treasury." Not conceding a political change in the post office to be inevitable, the Journal urged Democrats to present their claims, "as by the Fourth of March we shall want a good Democrat to distribute the Southern mail."¹

Democratic efforts, however, could not prevent the traditional office rotation which usually accompanied a political change in Presidential administration. On May 6, 1861, John Teesdale became the seventh Des Moines postmaster, the first non-Democrat to hold the office since 1847. Postmaster Redhead had seen it coming, and by the winter of 1860-1861 had begun expanding his book store inventory to include toys and a wide variety of gift and personal items (chessmen, gold pens, inkstands, purses, portfolios, etc.).² Redhead prospered, post office or not, and must have derived special satisfaction from the warm retirement speeches given him in May 1861. Even the Republican State Register praised his eight years of service, saying he had faithfully and industriously discharged his duties:

He has been accommodating alike to members of all parties. It has been his object from first to last to serve all alike, irrespective of party; and he has had the good judgment to secure the services of clerks whose gentlemanly and accommodating dispositions made them popular with the people. We allude distinctly to "Pap" Rasser, Stewart, Geo. C. Tichenor, Frank Weitman, Sim Welling and the rest of them.

Mr. Grinnell, special agent of the Department, informs us that the record of Mr. Redhead furnishes rare evidence of honesty

¹ Iowa State Journal, Jan. 26, 1861.

² Ibid., Dec. 15, 1860.

and fidelity. He has been of eminent service in the detection of dishonest Post Masters; and retires with the fullest confidence of the Department, and with the universal good will of his fellow citizens.¹

¹ Iowa State Register, May 22, 1861.

CHAPTER SIX

John Teesdale and Republicanism Triumphant,

1861-1865

At the time of his appointment John Teesdale (Figure 68) was 44 years old. Although he was never the subject of a biographical sketch in any of the city or county histories, it is known that, like his predecessor, he was a native of England, but unlike him, he was actively engaged in politics (Republican). Schooled in political affairs in Ohio, Teesdale was sent to Des Moines from Iowa City in late 1857, by Governor Grimes and Samuel Kirkwood. His mission: to become state printer and editor of a Republican newspaper which would support Kirkwood in the 1859 gubernatorial campaign. In this capacity Teesdale became a party stalwart, and his newspaper, the Iowa State Register, the most powerful Republican publication in the state.¹

On January 8, 1861, Teesdale served with Governor Kirkwood and John A. Kasson (Des Moines delegate to the 1860 Chicago convention) on the resolutions committee of a Republican mass meeting to express the state's opinion of the national situation. Attendants at this meeting were among the first Iowans to publicly declare the federal government was worth fighting for. Two months later, President Lincoln appointed Kasson First Assistant Postmaster General, giving Des Moines

¹ Edward Younger, John A. Kasson: Politics and Diplomacy from Lincoln to McKinley (Iowa City: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1955), pp. 91, 97.

its first link with the administrative level of the Post Office Department, and Kasson immediately gave the Des Moines post office to Teesdale.¹

Despite his heavy political involvement Teesdale seems to have been generally well-liked by the business community. Frank W. Palmer, Teesdale's Republican replacement at the helm of the Register, attempted to ease his acceptance, saying that from his three-year acquaintance with the man he could vouch "that Mr. T[eesdale] brings to every post of duty, the intelligence that knows how to act, the ability that executes, and the integrity that consults conscience in the performance of duty."²

And a time for conscience consultation it was, especially for Teesdale's political foes! Although Des Moines Democrats had generally sympathized with the South in its bristling defense of its constitutional rights, they could not condone overt hostility against the federal government.³ When the news of the bombardment and surrender of Fort Sumter reached Des Moines in April 1861,

¹ Ibid., p. 215; Brigham, I, 185.

² Iowa State Register, May 22, 1861; The 1860 federal census of Des Moines shows that Teesdale had real estate valued at \$12,000 and \$6,000 worth of personal property. At that time he was living with his wife Mary, five children, an Irish maid, and a 22-year-old man employed as a painter; In June 1862, Teesdale's home flower garden was proclaimed "the best ornamental arrangement found anywhere in the city." Brigham, I, 207.

³ On March 15, 1861, the Democratic Iowa State Journal insisted that while slavery was a regrettable institution it was not a sin, and that abolitionism was the chief cause of the strife threatening the

there was general consternation. That evening, the men who had voted for Lincoln assembled in the office of H. M. Hoxie in the Sherman building, and the Douglas men, in the office of Finch, Rice & Cavanagh, over B. F. Allen's bank. Mr. Brandt in his report of the meeting of the Democrats admitted his inability to do justice to the "burning words of patriotism" which fell from the lips of M. M. Crocker, afterwards the celebrated major general in the Union army, whom Grant so highly commended in his memoirs. He was followed by N. W. Mills, I. W. Griffith, D. O. Finch, J. S. Polk, H. M. Hoxie, Isaac Whicher, T. E. Settle, Elijah Sells, G. L. Godfrey, and others. They adjourned to meet at Ingham's hall the next morning at 9 o'clock. Long before the hour, the hall was filled. Crocker, standing upon a chair said: "We have not called this meeting for speech-making. We are here for business. The American flag has been insulted, has been fired upon by our own people, but, by the Eternal, it must be maintained!" He said he wanted "now--just now," to raise a company to join the first regiment from Iowa. "I want a hundred men to come right up here and give their names to 'Hub' Hoxie, to go with me to Dixie."¹

Crocker had hardly finished speaking before there were more men signed up than were needed. By common consent Crocker was made captain, N. L. Dykeman first lieutenant, and N. W. Mills second lieutenant. Crocker, with a year and a half experience as a West Point cadet, was a natural disciplinarian who soon placed his company in excellent condition for service. Crocker's many friends presented him with a fine horse and a military uniform ordered from New York City.² On May 1, 1861, the young lawyer notified Governor Kirkwood that:

country; As late as April 12, 1861, the same newspaper said that "If he [the president] has determined to send troops to the South to provoke a conflict, and then, calling an extra session of Congress, throwing himself upon it for support and aid, the Democracy of the North must act promptly in the premises. They have the balance of power in that body, and have only to absent themselves to leave the Republican members without a quorum and totally incapable of transacting business. Let them resign, go before the people on the question of peace or war, and they will be returned by majorities unprecedented in history." Brigham, I, 185.

¹ Ibid., I, 185-86.

² Ibid., p. 186.

Our company, the "Capital Guards" is now composed of 100 men Rank & file who are under process of constant drill, all of them young men and exceedingly anxious for the fray. We are in constant expectation of orders from you and are ready to start any where at a moments warning. The men are quartered at the different hotels in town at the expense of our citizens. A number of other companies have been formed in town--and among the rest a company having Mr. Finch for Capt. under the name of "Des Moines Guards." Our Company is the CAPITAL GUARDS, I call your attention to this that the similarity of name may not lead to a misapprehension.¹

On the morning of May 4, 1861, the day appointed for Crocker's company to depart for Keokuk to be mustered into the service, the community assembled in and around the old Methodist Church to see the boys off. With tears and hearty handshakes and many a "God bless you," the company marched into the great abyss of the Civil War. Thus was reenacted a scene witnessed in many American communities during the tumultuous spring of 1861. Every ear was attuned to the glorious excitement of the times, with only a few holding back in fear of what it all meant. When the Democratic Journal tried to throw water on the fire in May by declaring that the war feeling was "dying out gradually," that some of the Capital Guards were not willing to enlist for three years, the Republican Register demanded that the Journal interrogate the boys--"from their gallant, noble-hearted captain down to the humblest private"--and then publish their responses.²

Governor Kirkwood on May 15, 1861, called an extra session of the state legislature to deal with the problem of raising and equipping

¹ Marcellus M. Crocker to Gov. Kirkwood, May 1, 1861, in a private collection.

² Brigham, I, 186-87.

troops to aid in putting down the rebellion. From that point forward the state government was flooded with correspondence relating to these and other military problems (Figure 69). The strain placed on the postal service again pointed up the relative remoteness of Des Moines from the Mississippi River towns, and "the front." The closest rail lines terminated at Iowa City and Eddyville, and state officials were annoyed that it took three to five days for a letter to travel from Keokuk (the center of the state's military activities) to the state capital. In an attempt to remedy this situation the Burlington Hawkeye announced that its "pony express" would carry papers the seventy-five miles from Eddyville to Des Moines in eight hours.¹

By July 1861, however, the deteriorating military situation in Missouri had reversed the tables, making Iowa's communication lines look good. Southern sympathizers in Missouri had so disrupted the Hannibal & St. Joseph Rail Road that the Post Office Department and Congress were asked to reroute the overland California mail through Iowa. By mid-September the Des Moines post office had received its first large pile of overland mail bags, and shortly thereafter the local newspapers were crowing over the new route.² The Register reported that:

Among the mail sacks destined for the Pacific coast on the Overland Mail Route, we noticed one the other day at the Post Office on which was stamped the following--"From London to San Francisco." It is something to congratulate ourselves about

¹ Ibid., p. 185.

² Iowa State Register, July 17 and Sept. 18, 1861.

that Des Moines is located on the grand Overland Thoroughfare which connects the Metropolis of Europe with the new empire on the Pacific.¹

The new burden of handling the overland mail must have kept postmaster Teesdale busy, but the most newsworthy developments in the Des Moines post office, as in the rest of the community in the summer of 1861, revolved even more directly around the war. In late June First Assistant Postmaster General Kasson reminded Iowa postmasters of the recent order suspending mail service in the South, and forbidding the acceptance of letters from that section prepaid by either United States stamps or stamped envelopes. The use of such "by the discontinued Post-masters is nothing less than embezzlement, and cannot be recognized."²

The daily mail of the Des Moines post office had become so heavily laden with soldiers' letters by July that Teesdale opened the office earlier on Sunday to accommodate relatives and friends who were anxious for news from the front. At the post office, citizens could also study a secession flag captured by local boys in Missouri. It had one desolate star on a blue field, and two red stripes on a field of white. The Register's comment was that "The Southern Confederacy had a miserable abortion when that ugly thing was made."³

Iowa soldiers on their first Missouri campaigns that summer found

¹ Ibid., Oct. 23, 1861.

² Ibid., June 26, 1861.

³ Ibid., July 3, 1861.

that postage stamps which were usually in short supply in small towns, were rapidly depleted by the soldiers' needs. Kasson had good news for them in early August. "Postmasters at or near any camp or point occupied by the United States forces" were given permission to accept soldiers' letters without prepayment of postage:

The envelope should have plainly stamped or written on its face, the certificate "Soldier's letter," signed in writing by the Major or acting Major of the regiment, describing his regiment by its number and its state. The postage due on such letters will be collected at the office of delivery. Commissioned officers will prepay the postage as heretofore.¹

Although a military training camp was established on the outskirts of Des Moines in 1862, no stampless soldiers' letters are known from the city. Apparently Postmaster Teesdale always had an adequate supply of stamps on hand.

Probably the biggest news in all loyal United States post offices in the summer and fall of 1861 was the demonetization of all stamps and stamped envelopes issued in the period 1851-1860. The Postmaster General considered such action necessary to protect the Department and the federal government from losses that might result from the massive stocks of U.S. stamps and stamped envelopes on hand at post offices in the seceded states. Of course, demonetization could not take place until new stamps were on hand to replace the old. The Post Office Department anticipated that the new 1861 Issue would be available August 1, and planned to first ship the stamps to all post offices in states bordering the Confederacy. Third Assistant Postmaster General

¹ Ibid., Aug. 7, 1861.

A. N. Zevely projected that all border-state offices would be supplied by September 10, 1861, all offices in other northern states east of the Rocky Mountains by October 1, 1861, and far western offices by November 1, 1861. The old stamps were not to lose their value across the nation on a single, specified day but at each post office six days after the arrival of the new issue. Individual postmasters, in effect, were to become the agents of demonitization.¹

Because of an unprecedented demand for stamps, and an unexpected time lag in the production of the 1861 Issue, Zevely's distribution plan went awry. In mid-August 1861, the first shipments of the new issue were immediately sent to all the larger cities, without regard for the position of their states in Zevely's time frame.² A supply of the new stamps reached Des Moines August 24, 1861, and on August 28, 1861, the Register printed the following notice:

POST OFFICE NOTICE.--The Post Office Department has provided new stamps and envelopes as a substitute for those hitherto used. There is a change in the design and color of the stamps [Fig. 70], in order to prevent the use and sale of those feloniously appropriated by Southern traitors. For a period of six days, I shall be prepared to exchange new stamps and envelopes for the old issue. After that time the old issue will not be received in payment of postage.

Postmasters in adjoining towns are notified that they can exchange their old stamps and envelopes for new, at this office for a short time.

JOHN TEESDALE, P.M.
By Order of the P.O. Department

¹ Elliott Perry, "Demonetization of Stamps in 1861," in Cyclopedia of United States Postmarks and Postal History, (Moundsville, W. Va.: Delf Norona, 1933), Art. 10, 1, 3; Stanley B. Ashbrook, The United States One Cent Stamp of 1851-1857, II (New York: H. L. Lindquist, 1938), 29.

² Perry, "Demonetization of Stamps in 1861," p. 5.

As per Teesdale's announced schedule, the 1851-1860 issues became void in Des Moines on September 4, 1861, this compared to August 28 in Dubuque and Iowa City, August 30 in Keokuk, September 6 in Council Bluffs, and October 17 in Fairfield.¹ Teesdale warned that letters mailed with the old stamps after September 4 would be sent to the Dead Letter Office. He was careful to point out that this was by instruction of the Post Office Department, and he had no discretion in the matter.²

Although the Post Office Department ordered postmasters, after demonetization, to

return to the Third Assistant Postmaster General all stamps of the old style in your possession, including such as you may obtain by exchange, placing them in a secure package, which must be carefully registered in the manner prescribed by Chapter 39, of the Regulations of this Department.³

Des Moines postmaster John Teesdale decided on a decisive course of his own. On September 18, 1861, the Register reported that,

¹ The Daily Evening Union (Dubuque), Aug. 27, 1861; Iowa State Weekly Reporter (Iowa City), Aug. 21, 1861; The Daily Gate City (Keokuk), Aug. 26, 1861; Council Bluffs Nonpareil, Aug. 31, 1861; Fairfield Ledger, Oct. 10, 1861; An Iowa town which seems to have had more demonetization problems than most was Ottumwa. Its office ran out of the old issues in late August, and the new issue does not seem to have arrived until early November! The Weekly Ottumwa Courier, Aug. 28 and Nov. 6, 1861; Elliott Perry studied these plus thirteen other Iowa towns, and came up with the same picture: the larger towns were supplied in the period Aug. 22 - Sept. 7, and smaller towns in October and November. Obviously the size of the post office had replaced geographical placement as the determinant of when the new stamps would be shipped. Perry, "Iowa Advertisements of the 1861 Issue," Pat Paragraphs, No. 55 (1951), pp. 1854-57.

² Iowa State Register, Sept. 4, 1861.

³ Ashbrook, II, 28.

THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS' WORTH OF postage stamps and envelopes, were consumed last Friday in the furnace of the Steam Engine connected with the Savery Block! In the broad light of day, the heavy packages [of old issues] were conveyed in a wheelbarrow to the place of their demolition; and, strange as it may appear, the Post Master himself officiated as High Priest in the act ceremonial of burning the Post Office property!

By the close of the year 1861 nearly every Des Moines citizen had either directly associated himself/herself with the war effort, was planning to, or had been brought into association with it by the actions of friends or relatives. Former postmaster, Dr. T. K. Brooks, had become a regimental sutler. Will Porter, former editor of the Journal, was appointed a general recruiting officer for infantry at Des Moines. Another former postmaster, Hoyt Sherman, became an army paymaster. Two additional Des Moines companies, the "Des Moines Greys" and the "Des Moines Rifles," were organized in August. Many other military units passed through Des Moines, either on their way to Keokuk, or to Fort Randall, Dakota Territory, for frontier duty.¹

A small incident in early January 1862 served as a sad omen of things to come in the new year. The Western Stage Company brought through town the body of a Calhoun County soldier who had been a member of Captain Orr's company of the Tenth Iowa Regiment. Although the Register was unable to learn the man's name, it was told that he left a wife and two children.¹

The completion of a telegraph line to Des Moines in early January

¹ Brigham, I, 189-92.

² Ibid., p. 194.

1862, allowed the capitol city to closely monitor war news.¹ It was a major breakthrough in news gathering for the Register. When the first telegraphic news column appeared in its issue of January 14, 1862, the editor exulted:

Ever since Adam was an infant, the City of Des Moines, or the site where it is located, has been cut off from the exterior world. We have had no Railroads. We have had no telegraph. We have been excluded from the activities of commerce. Situated midway between the two great rivers of the continent, without anything but coaches and stage roads to connect us with the rest of mankind, our condition has not been the most pleasant in the world.

To-day our situation is immensely improved. We have the privilege of reading the latest dispatches in our own paper. The lightning and telegraph company have at length made us even with the Mississippi cities.

The most immediate effect of the arrival of the telegraph was a depletion of the long lines at the post office. "What a change!" announced the Register:

¹ Samuel F. B. Morse first proved the practicality of the telegraph in the U.S. in 1844 when he completed a 40-mile line between Washington and Baltimore. In 1845 Henry O'Rielly and others, under Morse patent, began extensive construction of telegraph lines all over the Midwest and South. By December 1847 a line was constructed to St. Louis, and in July 1848, another reached New Orleans. In 1849 the Illinois & Mississippi Telegraph Co. extended its lines across the Mississippi River to Keokuk, Burlington, Muscatine and Dubuque, and by 1853 Wapello and Davenport, Iowa were also added to that company's network. But at this point nearly all construction of telegraph lines in Iowa came to a halt. Although the first transcontinental line to California was completed Oct. 24, 1861, patent and company jurisdictional fights left Iowa telegraph lines where they were in 1853--in the Mississippi River towns. This stalemate was broken in the fall of 1861, when the destruction of parts of the transcontinental line in Missouri forced a decision to make Chicago, instead of St. Louis, the eastern terminus for Pacific news. To implement this decision the Illinois & Mississippi Telegraph Co. in November 1861 began hasty construction of a line from Omaha, through Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, to its office in Clinton. Robert Luther Thompson, Wiring a Continent: The History

A week or two since, when the Eastern mails arrived at this place, the Post Office was jammed to its utmost capacity with a crowd anxious to catch a glimpse of the war news from the river dailies. But the establishment of a Telegraph office here, coupled with the publication of the latest news in dailies at home, has made the Post Office at mail hours look a little like a deserted institution. It is not deserted by any means; but the press, the jam and the jostling push have lost much of their wonted liveliness.¹

With the help of the telegraph, news of the February 16 Union victory at Fort Donelson reached Des Moines the following day. Frank Palmer of the Register immediately ran with the intelligence to the Capitol, where he burst into the House Chamber shouting "General Grant has captured Fort Donelson!" The members spring to their feet, cheering, hugging each other, and shaking hands. The Senate soon joined in the impromptu celebration, and the legislature adjourned early to regroup at the Demoin House for a banquet and speeches.²

Captain N. W. Mills of the Second Iowa wrote his brother Frank that at Fort Donelson "there were many instances of bravery in all the companies. I was so proud of mine that I felt like hugging them."³ Frank Mills, in the meantime, was skillfully managing the Mills Brothers printing business at home. After the sluggish summer of 1861, business was on the upturn. The accelerating magnitude of the state's war exertion brought a corresponding increase in general business--all of

of the Telegraph Industry in the United States, 1832-1866 (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1947), pp. 22-27, 127, 131-32, 220, map following 262, 281-297, 363, 368-69.

¹ Daily State Register, Jan. 23, 1862.

² Brigham, I, 196-97.

³ Ibid., p. 198.

which benefited Mills Brothers. Their most popular line of merchandise in the spring of 1862 was patriotic stationary (Figures 71-72).

The reverse side of the Fort Donelson news was the casualty report. More than 600 Iowa soldiers were either killed or wounded. Sergeant N. W. Doty and Private T. G. Weeks of Des Moines were among the dead. On March 11 a public funeral was conducted in their honor. In attendance were both houses of the General Assembly, plus the governor and his staff.¹ The joy and sorrow of Fort Donelson heightened local support of federal administrative policies, and drove the Copperhead element underground. The Register summed it up for the Republicans and War Democrats with the following:

LINCOLN'S WAR--What do you think now of the "Lincoln War," you poor villainous sympathizer with treason? The Big Snake of Fort Donelson kind a squeezed you, didn't he? You feel sick at the stomach, don't you? Lincoln's War has become a more popular institution than you had anticipated? You poor starveling, forsaken of God and of good men, go and hang yourself. There is no manner of use for you on top of the ground. Get out!²

Later, when it was reported to the Register that a local merchant was expressing open sympathy for the Southern cause the editor refrained from publishing his name, but warned him that he must either

stop his foul utterances of treason, or take the consequences of a public and thorough exposure of his villainy. The Union men of this City have borne about long enough the taunts, revilings and revolting slang of disunionists. . . . It is all folly to send our soldiers to suffer and die in the enemy's Territory, while open, abhorrent and damnable Treason is preached constantly in our streets and boarding houses! The advice we give to every

¹ Ibid., p. 203.

² Daily State Register, Feb. 19, 1862.

loyal man, is to deface the frontispiece of every Traitor who indulges in his flouts against the Government.¹

Late winter snows caused serious mail delays in March 1862, but the telegraph quickly brought news of the victory at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, where two more Des Moines men were killed. The regimental flag of the Fourth Iowa was so riddled with bullets at Pea Ridge that it was sent back as a precious keepsake to the Des Moines ladies who made it.² Keepsakes were the order of the day. On March 11 the Register published a Columbus, Kentucky, letter from Hoyt Sherman who marveled at the army's good fortune in capturing that heavily fortified rebel point without the loss of a single life. Sherman said that while there he had "cramped" a couple of cannon balls for his office, as well as a rebel newspaper from Memphis. Pieces of armament and printed matter was interesting, but the written letters of the time were the most treasured of all keepsakes. In Des Moines many relatives loaned soldiers' letters to the newspapers for publication. By April 1862 the Register estimated that it had printed between fifty and one hundred letters from Des Moines and Polk County soldiers. Most of these, according to the editor, showed a high order of intelligence compared to "the awkward, misspelled, misspunctuated letters which are occasionally picked up in Secesh [secessionist] camps!"³ The Register published two captured Southern letters in 1862, making no mention of the rebel

¹ Ibid., June 6, 1862.

² Ibid., March 8, 1862; Brigham, I, 204-05.

³ Daily State Register, April 24, 1862.

stamps which carried them, but expressing the magnanimous hope for the physical safety of the rebel soldiers to whom the letters were addressed.¹

The sad news of the carnage at Shiloh and Corinth (April-June 1862) translated into the view of crippled soldiers on Des Moines streets that summer. In July Governor Kirkwood appointed Captain Mills major in the Second Iowa, and called for five new regiments of volunteer infantry:

The preservation of the Union, the perpetuity of our government, the honor of our State demand that this requisition should be promptly met. Our harvest is upon us and we have feared a lack of force to secure it. But we must imitate our brave Iowa boys in the field, meet new emergencies with new exertions. Our old men and our boys, unfit for war, if need be, our women must help to gather harvests while those able to bear arms go forth to aid their brave brethren in the field. The necessity is urgent. Our national existence is at stake.²

The message called for the raising of at least one of the regiments in the western portion of the state covered by the fifth and sixth congressional districts. In so stipulating Kirkwood set in motion the stimulus for the establishment of Des Moines' "Camp Burnside." Local businessmen, seeking new government contracts, argued that Des Moines be designated the rendezvous point for the recruits. They reasoned that if the men could go into camp and receive their first military training at home, two regiments instead of one could probably be formed.³

¹ Ibid., March 9 and May 24, 1862.

² Shambaugh, II, 497.

³ Daily State Register, July 20, 1862.

The state apparently agreed, and Judge J. H. Hatch of Des Moines was appointed acting quartermaster of the new regiment--to be designated the Twenty-third Iowa Infantry. Hatch immediately advertised for bids on construction of the new camp (Figure 73), and started hunting a site. The Register suggested that it be named "Camp Lincoln," as "Old Abe is worthy of being thus honored at the capital of Iowa."¹ Local public opinion, however, soon came forward with the name "Camp Crocker," after M. M. Crocker who had by that time risen to the rank of Colonel in the Thirteenth Iowa. The Register concurred, saying that "There is a fitness in this name which addresses itself at once to our local pride."²

By August 12 Hatch had chosen a west-side site a little south of the Iowa Central College building. He was impressed with the ease of water supply, and the presence of the college building which could be used as a hospital. But his superior, Colonel William Dewey, thought otherwise: 1,000 men would be difficult to control in town, and the proposed parade ground was too small. Dewey moved the site to the city limits east of the Capitol Building, and got thirty soldiers from town to assist in the construction of the barracks. Despite local objections officials settled on the name "Camp Burnside." The first out-of-town recruits began arriving the third week in August (Figure 74).³

¹ Ibid., Aug. 6, 1862.

² Ibid., Aug. 10, 1862.

³ Ibid., Aug. 12, 13, 16, 17, 1862.

Five hundred men had reported for duty by August 28, and Colonel Dewey had them out on dress parade every evening. The Register reported that they "presented a magnificent appearance in their new uniforms."¹ On September 2 the ladies of Des Moines and Polk County gave the soldiers a complimentary dinner at the barracks, and on the 5th the men were paid their first month's wages in advance. Some of them "made a misapplication of their funds by purchasing a 'wee bit' too much of a fluid which is considered intoxicating."² (Figure 75)

After rumors and counter rumors (Figure 76), and only a month of training, Colonel Dewey started moving his Twenty-Third Regiment overland toward Keokuk. As soon as a company of the Twenty-Third Regiment would vacate a barracks, a company of the newly-formed Thirty-Ninth Regiment would take its place. As happy as Des Moines citizens were to see the sometimes troublesome soldiers complete their training, they did admit to a certain fondness for them and the local color they provided (Figure 77). The Register said that the Twenty-Third had been in town "long enough to entitle it to the name of a home institution," that their fortunes would be followed "with a great deal of solicitude."³ At the same time the Register worried that the eventual departure of all the soldiers would leave the city in an insecure position. There was the ever-present possibility of a "Secesh raid" from Missouri, and the Indian problems along the state's northern border alarmed many.⁴

¹ Ibid., Aug. 31, 1862.

³ Ibid., Sept. 21, 1862.

² Ibid., Aug. 30 and Sept. 6, 1862.

⁴ Ibid., Sept. 9-10, and 23, 1862.

On October 12, 1862, the town was deeply grieved by the receipt of a telegram from General Tuttle announcing the death of Lieutenant Colonel N. W. Mills at the second battle of Corinth. Tuttle followed his telegram with a letter in which he called the 30-year-old founder of Mills & Co. "a little nearer just right than any other man I ever knew--high-minded, honorable, brave as a lion."¹ Frank Mills brought his brother's body home for the funeral which was attended by the entire business community. The coffin, wreathed with flowers and evergreens, was not opened. Upon it were placed the dead soldier's sword, pistols, holsters, and other equipment. The services, at Ingham Hall, moved the large assemblage to tears.²

The first death in the Camp Burnside hospital occurred in early November (a measles relapse). And on November 30 Mrs. Dewey received word of Colonel Dewey's death in Missouri. She was at that time still living with the family of A. M. Lyon, in the same house near Camp Burnside which she had shared with the Colonel when he was training the Twenty-Third Regiment. The close of the fateful year 1862 found many in Des Moines suffering from emotional strain. More than any other war year, 1862 would be remembered as the bearer of death.³

The busy year had been felt in the post office. The presence of the soldiers at Camp Burnside added to the volume of the mail, there

¹ Brigham, I, 212-13.

² Ibid., p. 213.

³ Ibid., pp. 213-14.

was agitation for a daily route to St. Paul, the tri-weekly Council Bluffs service was increased to a daily route, and Teesdale's own duties were enlarged to include the semi-military function of issuing passes to all citizens wishing to travel.¹ Teesdale's efficient operation of the post office was praised by the Register:

The Des Moines Post Office, in the attentive services of F. W. Chaffee and Sim Welling, and in the careful supervision of Mr. Teesdale, is a deservedly popular establishment. It grinds out its business systematically and addresses itself to the respect of all comers and goers. The care of an important Post Office involves an immense amount of drudgery which must be performed not only in the day-time, but in the night when men engaged in other business are enjoying a refreshing nap.²

By late August 1862, the first examples of the new postage currency had reached Des Moines. But the very short supply of the new currency did nothing to alleviate the problem it had been created to solve. Merchants, experiencing a critically short supply of small change, simply took to purchasing postage stamps to use for the same purpose--twenty to fifty dollars worth per day.³ Postmaster Teesdale and the Register editor were annoyed:

The stamps cannot be safely carried in the pocket of a laboring man for a single day. The mucilage on them is softened, and they adhere together in such a manner as to damage them in the separations. As a consequence they are unfit for postal purposes. The Postmaster is not permitted, by his instructions, to purchase stamps that are not in a merchantable condition, and he is not permitted to recognize those placed on letters where they are so

¹ Daily State Register, Feb. 27, March 7, Aug. 23, and Sept. 14, 1862.

² Ibid., May 25, 1862.

³ Ibid., Aug. 29 and Sept. 17, 1862.

badly defaced and soiled as to render it doubtful whether they have not already been once used for postal purposes. He desires us to say to business men, that they will consult their own interest by bringing the postal stamp currency into disuse as soon as possible. Otherwise they may find themselves with a large stock of stamps on hands that cannot be received for postal or any other purpose.¹

A week later the Register announced that the Post Office Department had forbidden the sale of postage stamps for any other than postal purposes.²

The shortage of circulating small change was especially felt in Des Moines for 1862 marked a real turning point in the city's business development. The economic upswing of the spring had turned into a positive boom by the fall. Farm income was up, new houses and business blocks were under construction, and the town's population had climbed to almost five thousand. Population growth was due in part to the presence of many refugees from the war-torn state of Missouri.³ As the Register put it:

One cause alone has produced this excess of animation. The war calls the soldier here--the war, in part, calls the Extra Session. The War is at once the animus and the desolation of the country. It gives life and it gives death. So it will be until the struggle terminates in the reestablishment of the National Authority, or in that rayless night which succeeds the extinction of constitutional liberty!⁴

The news of President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, which

¹ Ibid., Sept. 17, 1862.

² Ibid., Sept. 23, 1862.

³ Ibid., May 8, 1862; Brigham, I, 214.

⁴ Daily State Register, Sept. 4, 1862.

reached Des Moines in early January 1863, set the stage for renewed political antagonism (often bordering on hypocrisy) in the local press. Loyal Democrats, though supporting war expenditures, advocated a negotiated peace at the earliest opportunity. They also clung to their belief that federal emancipation was unconstitutional, impractical, and unwise. Theirs was a government of white men, they insisted; blacks were not entitled to political or social equality. Republicans, they charged, were trying to Africanize the Midwest.¹

Republicans, while not generally concerned about black rights, held that since blacks were the cause of the war they should be made useful in putting an end to it. The Republican Register said that the President's proclamation "was issued simply as a war measure, and, as such, it will give the Slave Power a staggering blow from which it will not recover."²

News of a new hotel planned for the east side of the river provided an irresistible temptation for one of the sharpest barbs in the Democratic press:

We are informed that a project is on foot, and in fact, partially consummated, by which a new hotel is to be started in East Des Moines. It will be something new, the intention being to have it conducted entirely by "American citizens of African descent."

Great efforts are being made to have the hotel in running order in time to accomodate the delegates to the Republican convention . . . and we trust the effort will be successful. The

¹ V. Jacque Voegeli, Free But Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro During the Civil War (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 35-36.

² Daily State Register, Jan. 6, 1863.

taste of the projectors of this great work is evidenced by the name they have selected for the house. It is to be called the Lincoln House. Later--we understand that a few white girls with good references can obtain situations as servants at moderate wages.¹

To this the Register replied:

It is true that the Negroes belong to a degraded race; but it is equally true that the devils who malignantly abuse them, and divide the Government, are more degraded by far than the greatest, dirtiest Ethiopian whose body finds a resting place in the "Lincum Hotel."²

By 1863 the Register was referring to local Peace Democrats as Copperheads, a term which first appeared in the New York Tribune for July 20, 1861, and which had since rapidly spread across the entire country. The Register likened Copperheads to the Tories of the Revolutionary period. Henry Clay Dean, a Methodist minister and eloquent speaker, was one of Iowa's most influential Copperheads. After holding forth to a squad of howling supporters in front of the Demoine House (Figure 79) on April 1, 1863, the Register termed his speech

a tissue of blackguardisms from beginning to end. The old scamp has evidently come among us to discourage enlistments, and to incite a spirit of resistance to the laws. He is encouraging desertions from the army, and doing all in his power to stir up insubordination to the constitutional authorities of the country.³

In a municipal election of May 4, 1863, Unionists rejoiced in the defeat of Democratic mayor Kavanaugh, and the election of Republicans in six of the seven city wards. Democrats blamed the defeat of their

¹ Des Moines Times, June 17, 1863.

² Daily State Register, Aug. 5, 1863.

³ Ibid., April 2, 1863.

mayor on Republican anti-Catholic sentiment and federal money and arms which they supposed available to their opponents.¹

Jubilant Republicans badgered their defeated rivals with a letter from Des Moines Democrat Marcellus M. Crocker (now a brigadier general) condemning copperhead activities at home. The Register asked why the Tories who voted for Kavanaugh didn't carry their philosophy full circle and ostracize the military members of their party (Crocker, Williamson, and Tichenor) who were actively engaged in ending the rebellion by force of arms:

But this is a two-handed game. Loyal Democrats in the army and out of it have the privilege also of reading Tories out of the party. If Finch is a true Democrat, General Jackson was a Traitor. If Turk is a true Democrat, Benedict Arnold was a Christian and a Patriot. If Walker is a true Democrat, Judas Iscariot was a devout friend of the Savior whom he betrayed with a kiss for thirty pieces of silver.²

So vehement was the Register's editor, F. W. Palmer, in his attack on local Peace Democrats, that several of his victims (B. N. Kinyon, William McHenry, and John Turk) sued him for libel. Palmer had to apologize to his readers for the absence of the usual local news: "ye local has been engaged for twenty-four hours in making an assignment of his property . . . to escape the payment of \$10,000."³

¹ Ibid., May 5 and 12, 1863.

² Ibid., May 7, 1863.

³ Ibid., May 21 and 23, 1863; In August 1863, the charges were thrown out of court by a grand jury. Seemingly vindicated, Palmer declared, "The Freedom of the press has been sustained; and as dirty a set of sorry Copperheads as ever disgraced a white settlement in a free country, have been rebuked and humiliated." Ibid., Aug. 5, 1863.

Military prospects did not appear encouraging in early 1863. In January Dr. Alexander Shaw, former East Des Moines postmaster, found himself serving as surgeon of the 4th Iowa Infantry on board the steamer "Hiawatha" above Vicksburg. Shaw was impressed with rebel fortifications at Vicksburg, and told the Register:

I believe Vicksburg to be the Gibraltar of the United States . . . I am no military man, but it occurs to me that an entrance must be effected into Vicksburg by storm, which must result in great sacrifice of life. To besiege the town, and attempt to starve out the inhabitants, is sheer folly. The rebels are supplied bountifully with provisions.¹

Early Des Moines postmaster, Dr. T. K. Brooks, also descended the river to Vicksburg in January 1863, to do what he could to relieve the suffering of wounded Iowa soldiers. And on January 18, 1863, General Crocker's brigade, a part of McArthur's Sixth Division, departed Memphis for the Vicksburg campaign. During the first half of 1863 military movements around Vicksburg monopolized the war news in Des Moines newspapers.²

So eager were Des Moines citizens for good news from Vicksburg, that when the Register of May 25, 1863, prematurely announced the fall of the "Hill City," a spontaneous celebration ensued, the likes of which had not been seen since the Fort Donelson victory. To the hopeful, the war was virtually over. Yet, on June 4, 1863, the Register announced the death of Des Moines businessman Alfred M. Lyon in yet another fight at Vicksburg. Although old enough to escape military

¹ Ibid., Feb. 11, 1863.

² Ibid., Jan. 16 and 31, 1863.

duty, Lyon had enlisted as sutler of the 23rd Iowa. He had stated repeatedly before leaving Des Moines, that if the regiment became engaged in battle, he would shoulder a musket and go into the ranks.¹

On June 10, 1863, General Crocker, on a leave of absence to nurse a recurring case of tuberculosis, stepped off a stage in Des Moines to become the most popular man of the hour. Republicans urged him to allow his name to be presented for the gubernatorial nomination at their June 17 convention, and Des Moines officials appointed him presiding officer of the upcoming Fourth of July celebration. Crocker declined running for governor saying that he considered it his duty to remain in the army until the close of the war. Instead, he addressed patriotic meetings in Des Moines and Adel, and caught up on his correspondence. One of his letters written during this period, traveled all the way to the desk of President Lincoln, and serves as one of only a few known Lincoln documents with Des Moines connections (Figure 80).²

In reporting the July 8, 1863, meeting of the State Democratic Convention, the Register accused that body of refusing to applaud the gallant Union armies for their victories at Vicksburg and Gettysburg: "There were cheers, however, for Vallandigham! There were cheers for

¹ Brigham, I, 217; Daily State Register, June 4, 1863.

² Daily State Register, June 11, 13, 14, and 24, 1863.

George W. Jones and Mahony. There were cheers for the head devils of the Rebellion!"¹

The last Des Moines citizen to receive word of the Union victories of July 4 was probably John A. Kasson. Kasson, then in Paris serving as United States commissioner to the international postal conference, wrote his family in Des Moines that Sunday, July 19, 1863,

was a joyous day with Americans here, receiving as we did our news by the Canada of the fall of Vicksburg, and total defeat of Lee! When it was understood that this was true, through a private dispatch to one of our bankers, our joy ran over. The Vicksburg news was circulated at the American chapel during morning services; the news of Lee's defeat at the assembling of the congregation in the afternoon.²

While Kasson was busy in Paris helping to formulate uniform rates for international mail, his political ally, John Teesdale, was fully occupied with the business of the Des Moines post office. The arrival of the Cedar Rapids & Missouri River Rail Road at Marshalltown in January 1863, cut the delivery time for the Iowa City mail, but bad weather in February slowed it down again. By March the Register was complaining of noncompliance with the contracted delivery time of both the Iowa City and Burlington mail. The editor acknowledged the bad condition of the roads leading to the rail terminus at both Marshalltown and Eddyville (Keokuk, Ft. Des Moines & Minnesota Rail Road), but insisted that: "If the fast time cannot be made, business men ought to know it, that their correspondence may be governed accordingly."³

¹ Ibid., July 9, 1863.

² Ibid., Aug. 11, 1863.

³ Ibid., Jan. 18, Feb. 21, and March 24, 1863; While not mentioned in the newspapers, another local postal problem in the spring of 1863

In March 1863, Postmaster Teesdale found time to both judge a public school spelling match, and travel with his daughter to Marshalltown for a railroad celebration. And in April he inaugurated a new service at the Des Moines Office--a mail service window exclusively for the use of ladies. The idea was to eliminate their frustration at having to wait in a long line of businessmen before their mail could be called for.¹

Teesdale announced the new postage rate law of 1863 in the Register of June 24. He called attention to section three which made prepayment compulsory, and added that payment for at least one quarter of the year had to be made before a post office box could be assigned. After announcing the one rate increase (half-ounce drop letters from one to two cents) Teesdale promised that letters would be advertised weekly instead of monthly, and reminded patrons that "only half the amount of rent is charged for boxes and drawers at the Des Moines office, that is collected at some of the larger offices in the State."

While no new regular-issue postage stamps were issued in 1863, most of the first issue revenue stamps of 1862 were made available in Des Moines in January 1863. The law firm of Casady & Polk was the first local business to notify the public that they had

just received a supply of the various stamps required under the late Internal Revenue Act, and are prepared to execute and stamp

seems to have been a shortage of 3¢ stamps. There are so many Des Moines covers known from this period franked by three copies of the blue 1¢ 1861 Issue (Fig. 78) that collectors refer to it as the "blue period."

¹ Ibid., March 7, 11, and April 17, 1863.

official Bonds, Deeds, Mortgages, Bills of Exchange and Promissory Notes and all other instruments required to be stamped.¹

The copperhead frenzy which permeated Des Moines politics of 1863-64 was also felt on the fringes of postal service. No anti-administration patriotic cover is known used from Des Moines during this period, but the following Register article proves that the prevalent patriotic designs were not acceptable to all:

FEMALE REBEL.--A female living in this city, taking advantage of the immunities of her sex, has on several occasions made public exhibition of her sympathy with the Rebellion by wearing adornments on her person which indicate her rebel feelings. Two or three days since she refused to buy a package of envelopes, simply because they were adorned with Union emblems! She had better go down South among the "niggers" where she properly belongs.²

Although Camp Burnside ceased operation in late 1862, soldiers were seldom absent from the streets and sidewalks of the capital city in 1863 and 1864. They were continually arriving home on leave, engaging in recruiting activity, or moving through town on their way to western military posts. On April 9, 1863, flags were raised on the Capitol Building, court house, and many business buildings to greet the 1,100-man 6th Iowa Cavalry Regiment passing through on its way to Sioux City. Citizens collected in large numbers along the streets to witness the passing of the orderly horsemen and their seventy or eighty wagons. The scene was repeated on August 12, 1863, when six companies of the 7th Cavalry came through on their way to Omaha (Figure 81).³

¹ Ibid., Jan. 1, 1863.

² Ibid., May 19, 1863.

³ Ibid., April 10 and Aug. 13, 1863.

While the political and military war raged on, Des Moines business continued strong in 1863. A correspondent of the Davenport Gazette reported that exuberant railroad expectations permeated all levels of local society, and agreed that once these hopes were realized, "Des Moines will . . . be the Indianapolis of Iowa, with advantages in location and surrounding country which that city does not possess."¹

By the fall of 1863, the central business district had spread west from Second Street along both Court Avenue and Walnut Street, lots in the western part of town were selling for the average price of \$400, a large Catholic church and nearly one hundred other buildings were under construction, money was abundant, labor was in great demand, the population had grown to 5,451, and rents were exorbitant. Houses which rented for \$5 a month in 1862, were renting for \$20 a month in October 1863.² What Des Moines was experiencing was a classical case of wartime inflation. Many goods and services were in short supply, and a great demand brought elevated prices and a corresponding hardship to many middle class citizens. Americans living in the last quarter of the twentieth century can relate to the Register's philosophizing on the times:

There is an insane rush everywhere for big prices. Wood has "riz"; coal has "riz"; labor of all kinds is demanding fabulous prices; rents are enormous; coffee is 50 cents per pound; other groceries in proportion; dry goods have leaped upward like rockets; so has calico and other female apparel; and the value of real estate is

¹ Daily State Register, May 12, 1863.

² Daily State Register, May 13, Aug. 18, Oct. 29, 1863, and Feb. 11, 1864.

computed at billions! This inflation of prices cannot last. . . . The financial rampage of 1856 is not forgotten. The bubble will collapse ere long. . . . Extortion is the ruling imp of the times.--He rules grandly for a season. He demands 50 cents for cutting three sticks of small wood. His female contraband charges 5 cents a minute for tending baby. . . . A man can't afford even the luxury of dying in these times.¹

From time to time during the war Iowa soldiers forwarded to the Register copies of southern newspapers. Palmer ridiculed the dingy wallpaper utilized by several different issues of the Vicksburg Daily Citizen of June 1863, and the dark wrapping paper and reduced size of other rebel papers. Yet the Register was not totally protected from the hardships of the war. Although Des Moines citizens were not forced to the home manufacture of adversity envelopes and writing paper, they found themselves paying dearly for the paper stock offered by local merchants. In an effort to cut paper costs the Register, as well as Redhead's bookstore, advertised for clean cotton and linen rags (the raw material of good-quality paper) to sell to their out-of-town suppliers.²

High prices notwithstanding, Des Moines business capital (unlike that of most southern cities) was at least available to meet business demand. In 1864 R. Rollings & Company began construction of a paper mill on the west side of town. By February 1865 this mill was supplying all of the Register's needs.³

¹ Ibid., Nov. 7, 1863.

² Ibid., Jan. 11, April 28, and July 3, 1863.

³ Ibid., March 12, May 28, 1864, and Feb. 10, 1865.

The winter of 1863-64 brought the usual misery of mud, snow, and frigid temperatures. Some thought that much of the immorality of the city could be traced to poor sidewalks. "It is an excessive trial to any man's pious disposition, to promenade the streets, especially after night sets in."¹ That winter also brought misery to those men of military age who had up to that time managed to escape enlistment. In mid-December 1863, the provost marshal's office distributed posters throughout the city listing the names of all men subject to the draft. Just when the draft would be made was not known; it depended on whether state and local enlistment quotas were met.²

In response to a federal request Governor Stone on April 23, 1864, issued a call for ten regiments of hundred-day men. The call was answered with enthusiasm from all parts of the state. But so many were already in the service that enlistments lagged somewhat, and Des Moines, along with other Iowa communities, was faced with a herculean effort of meeting the new demand upon its reserves.

Army enlistment officers lent a hand by composing newspaper notices such as the following:

DES MOINES boys wishing to see rebels in the "last ditch," and attend the funeral of the Rebellion, may have an opportunity by reporting themselves to Capt. Roach, at the office of Mr. Orwig, on or before Saturday next.³

But in the end it remained a community effort. On May 12, 1864,

¹ Ibid., Dec. 9, 1863.

² Ibid., Dec. 15, 1863.

³ Ibid., May 26, 1864.

eighteen of the leading employers of the city agreed to give full consent to all employees who would enlist, and to safeguard their positions until the time of their return. Over \$10,000 was also raised to be paid to the families of enlistees. On May 14, 1864, forty-one married women advertised in the Register that they would, as far as they were capable, "take the places in business of all patriotic men who will enlist and hasten to the support of our glorious husbands, sons and brothers in arms." Not to be outdone, forty-six young women of unmarried status announced on May 15 that they would fill, as far as possible, the places temporarily made vacant by the enlistment of clerks for the hundred-day term.¹

Despite all these efforts the provost marshal announced on July 17, 1864, that the city was thirty-two men short of its quota. In September a draft would be held to fill the quota. The Register noted that although it was not generally understood, a man liable to the draft could, before the drawing, employ a substitute. Palmer reported that one substitute had been hired for \$20, but added, "we presume that cases of this kind are remarkably rare."² Palmer underestimated the number of businessmen who desired to remain at the helm of their enterprises during flush times. Six weeks later the Register of August 19, 1864, carried the following note from recruiting officer Will Porter:

¹ Brigham, I, 222-23.

² Ibid., p. 226; Daily State Register, July 2, 1864.

VOLUNTEERS--\$10,000

A number of substitutes, for military service wanted immediately. Also, a few Representative Recruits. Apply to Will Porter, Union Block, next door to Keyes & Knights, upstairs.

All persons wishing to enlist will do well to call.¹

When the much-talked-about draft took place on Monday, September 26, 1864, the provost marshal's office was filled with spectators who manifested considerable interest in the revolutions of the wheel. A total of forty-nine Polk County men had their names drawn, only seven of whom actually lived in Des Moines.²

The enlistees must have raised their right hands with a great deal of confidence at the time of their swearing in. In the two weeks prior to the draft the telegraph had conveyed the news of the fall of Atlanta, and of Sheridan's victory at Winchester, Virginia. Yet, only a short week after the departure of the newly drafted soldiers, the Register introduced a military topic of far more concern than the draft. Sterling Price, "the most ubiquitous general in Christendom," was rumored to have "made a recent visit to Des Moines, Council Bluffs, and other points in central and western Iowa, with a view to reconnoiter vulnerable points, and improvise an invasion of our state."³

Tension mounted until October 15-16, 1864, when pandemonium erupted in response to the news that rebel general Price had not only crossed the Missouri River on his way toward Iowa, but that Bill

¹ Daily State Register, Aug. 19, 1864.

² Ibid., Sept. 27, 1864.

³ Ibid., Oct. 5, 1864.

Anderson's guerrilla band was leading the advance, and had already taken possession of Albia in Monroe County, Iowa! The Des Moines Battery of light artillery quickly harnessed up and filled their caissons with ammunition, mounted patrols were placed on all the roads leading to Des Moines, and couriers were sent to Warren, Marion, and Madison counties. The Register proclaimed that whether the scare was real or not, it was beneficial as a means of getting the city in shape. "It has been our conviction from the first, that Des Moines was in danger. Lawrence in Kansas, was sacked and destroyed. The same inducements exist to attack Des Moines."¹

It was soon made clear that the city was in no danger. Bill Anderson's group had dispersed after causing havoc at Centralia, Missouri (September 27), and after capturing Glasgow, Missouri (October 15), Price and his 9,000 Confederate troops had turned west toward Kansas City. By November 1, 1864, the Missouri threat had been forgotten, and Des Moines turned its attention to the upcoming presidential election.

Local Peace Democrats remained opposed to Lincoln's policies. They claimed that he,

invites foreign intervention by rejecting all overtures for compromise, reconciliation and peace. . . . In the name of heaven how much has he advanced the cause of emancipation or promoted the interest of the Negro? He has ruined his own country and placed the bondage of the Negro beyond redemption.²

¹ Ibid., Oct. 15-16, 1864.

² The Daily Iowa Statesman, Oct. 8, 1863; Democrats also cited unconstitutional arrests and newspaper suppression by the party in

Polk County Republicans, on the other hand, recognized in Abraham Lincoln a President who, "has proved himself at the Helm of state, a safe pilot, a wise statesman, a true patriot, and the right man in the right place."¹

The Register reported that a McClellan rally held September 3, 1864, was a feeble affair attended by few, "the speeches were without point, or pith, or decency. If the copperheads of this county expect to make votes by such ridiculous demonstrations, they are sadly mistaken."² On November 1, 1864, Frank Palmer admonished his readers to do their duty at the polls:

Every reader of the Register comprehends the fact that the Slaveholders' Rebellion suspends its tenure of life on the hope of General McCELLAN's success.--Every Union man knows, and every Copperhead ought to know, and every Rebel knows, that the re-election of ABRAHAM LINCOLN to the Presidency will be an authoritative indication that the American People are determined to save their country and perpetuate their Government at all hazards. His re-election will be the greatest victory of the war. It will crush out the last hope of the Rebellion.

Palmer, like a general in the field, wanted not only to win the battle, but to crush the enemy. "We must 'larrup' them until their little, juiceless party shall look like the genius of obliteration! Mind that. We must wipe 'em out."³

power, and asked if the disloyalty label hadn't been assigned to the wrong party. Des Moines Times, June 17, 1863.

¹ Daily State Register, Feb. 3, 1864.

² Ibid., Sept. 6, 1864.

³ Ibid., Nov. 1, 1864.

The election resulted in a clear, though not overwhelming Republican victory. Polk County voted 1,509 for Lincoln, and 1,092 for McClellan. The city of Des Moines (i.e. Des Moines and Lee Townships) gave Lincoln 675 and McClelland 562. The margin of victory in the army of Iowa was much greater. Charles Aldrick, commissioner to take the vote of Iowa regiments in General Grant's command, notified the Register that 95 of every 100 votes cast were for Lincoln.¹

The last full year of the war, 1864, saw a great variety of activity in the capital city. J. M. Starr of Richmond, Indiana, contracted with Des Moines officials to lay pipe and introduce lighting gas to the city at \$8 per 100 cubic feet, there was public agitation for a free bridge, and William Lehman even composed and published a piece of music titled the Des Moines City Waltz!²

The last year of the war also witnessed considerable activity in the sphere of postal affairs. In late 1863 the Register began pushing for a daily mail between Des Moines and the railhead at Marshalltown, to be carried by the line of coaches already in service. By December 1863, the United States Express Company began making two round trips a week between the two places. When the Cedar Rapids & Missouri River R.R. pushed west from Marshalltown to Nevada in the

¹ Ibid., Nov. 17 and 19, 1864; When the Democratic Statesman ceased publication after the election Frank Palmer said "They died because they were published in Iowa instead of Richmond or South Carolina." Ibid., Nov. 29, 1864.

² Ibid., Feb. 17, April 20, and Nov. 10, 1864.

spring of 1864, that town became the focal point for better mail service (Figure 82).¹

In mid-May 1864, the Post Office Department authorized a daily mail between Des Moines and Nevada to begin July 1, 1864. But on May 31 the Western Stage Company, which won the contract, announced that as a public service act they would immediately commence the transport of mail between the two towns. On July 1, 1864, daily mail service was also initiated to Osceola and Leon via Indianola, bringing the southern tier of counties much closer to the capital.²

The Register editor was quick to pick up on postal developments which reflected favorably on John Kasson, and adversely on the South. The newspaper noted that in a debate in the House of Representatives Kasson stated that the Post Office was now self-sustaining, due mainly to increased efficiency in every branch, and the discontinuance of mail service to the rebel states. "The records of the Department show that those States never yielded an adequate return for the mail facilities conferred upon them. They were always burthenson."³

When Palmer stepped into the Des Moines post office in late October 1864, he had more news to report. Wesley Redhead's bookstore had moved out to a new building leaving post office customers with much more space:

¹ Ibid., Nov. 22, Dec. 4, 1863, and May 3, 1864.

² Ibid., May 18, 31, and July 13, 17, 1864.

³ Ibid., Jan. 31, 1864.

We didn't recognize anything. Everything is changed. The book store has been withdrawn, and nothing but the boxes and drawers of the Post Office are visible. When they get up a better sidewalk in front of the entrance, the people will rejoice with much joy.¹

On November 1, 1864, the Des Moines post office joined that of Dubuque, Davenport, Muscatine, Burlington, and Keokuk, as the first Iowa offices selling money orders. Teesdale explained that the new system offered special advantages and guarantees for the transmission of small sums of money through the mail. "Orders are not to exceed in value \$30. Where large sums are to be transmitted, they must be divided into orders not exceeding the sum just named."²

The fourth quarter of 1864 also witnessed another unannounced development in the Des Moines post office. Some time between September 7, 1864, and January 18, 1865, the Type 9 postmark (Figure 83) was replaced with Type 10 (Figures 83, 84, 85). No longer would the town marking be placed on the opposite side of the envelope from the stamp and killer. Type 10 combined the town marking with the killer as integral parts of a single cancelling device.

While the Des Moines press of 1849-1864 reveals no evidence of corruption in the Des Moines post office, there are a number of reminders that it existed elsewhere. On July 7, 1864, the Register noted the arrival of Judge D. E. Brainard, a special agent of the Post Office Department. He had just returned from Minnesota where two

¹ Ibid., Oct. 22, 1864.

² Ibid., Oct. 29, 1864.

stage drivers had been systematically engaged in plundering the mails.

And in December 1864, the following item appeared:

A POSTMASTER JERKED!--On Sunday last, U.S. Mail Agent, C. J. Leonard, and Deputy Marshal Yost of Kansas, passed through this place, having in their custody C. T. Jameson, late Post Master at Fort Kearney, who has been sentenced to an imprisonment of ten years for robbing the mail. We learn that he will be confined in the Penitentiary of Michigan. The last stealing he did which brought about his conviction, amounted to three dollars! That was a dear steal!¹

The Civil War period development, having the greatest potential impact on future Des Moines postal service, occurred during the winter of 1864-65. In December 1864, the Des Moines Valley R.R. (successor to the Keokuk & Ft. Des Moines R.R.) reached Pella, only 42 miles south-east of Des Moines. Officials of the Des Moines Valley R.R. let it be known that \$100,000 in extra funds were necessary if the road was to continue its progress toward the capital city, and the Register wholeheartedly supported their plea:

It may as well be understood now as hereafter, that this effort to bring the Valley Road here before the opening of another year, is a matter of life or death with us. The Cedar Rapids Road has irrevocably passed us forty miles to the Northward--The M & M R. R. is stuck fast out on the prairie between Grinnel and Newton. Our only hope for the present comes from the immediate extension of the Valley Road.²

By March 23, 1865, Des Moines businessmen had pledged \$70,000. When the war ended Des Moines was on the verge of a real breakthrough in both transportation and fast mail delivery.

And what of the war? One last 1864 Register note on postal service

¹ Ibid., Dec. 6, 1864.

² Ibid., March 23, 1865.

pointed the way towards the fall of the Confederacy. When readers complained to Palmer that they received no mail from relatives in General Sherman's army, he reminded them that,

There are no Federal mails in the heart of Georgia; and all the information which has reached the Loyal states from Sherman's Expedition, has come through Rebel sources. When the army is established on the coast, the letters come as aforetime.¹

The best that Palmer could do was to announce, several weeks later, that Lt. Col. Griffiths of the 39th Iowa would soon be starting for Savannah, and would be happy to carry with him any letters which the public wanted forwarded to the army.²

Although cut off from normal postal communication Sherman and his army were rapidly destroying the Confederacy's will to resist. After capturing Savannah in December Sherman turned north through the Carolinas, intending to join forces with Grant to destroy Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. On February 22, 1865, Des Moines' cannons were fired in celebration of the fall of Columbia and Charleston, South Carolina, and on April 3, 1865, the glad news of Richmond's fall electrified the capital city. Public and private buildings were illuminated in the evening, and Governor Stone ordered the Des Moines Artillery to fire one hundred guns in honor of the long-awaited event. Finally, a short week later, Lee's surrender was announced. Again one hundred guns were fired on Capitol Hill by order of the governor, and thirty-six down at the point, by order of the mayor. The fall of

¹ Ibid., Dec. 17, 1864.

² Ibid., Jan. 28, 1865.

Richmond was the beginning of the end: the surrender of Lee was the end!¹

The heavy Des Moines cannonade of the first ten days of April broke windows all over town. Palmer reported that:

The cannoniers . . . had no intention to damage property. When the next celebration shall come off, they will without doubt take their exploding irons a little further away from the buildings. A big noise by its concussion of the air, has about as much damaging tendency as a good-sized earthquake.²

Tragically, the next big news did not call for a cannonade. When the telegraph brought news of President Lincoln's death on April 15, 1865, joy over the surrender turned to mourning. The killing of the President produced a sense of personal loss (Figures 86, 87). On that Sunday business generally was suspended. Men gathered in groups about the newspaper office and hotels, and in subdued voices talked of the great calamity. Many wore crepe, desiring to express without words the sense of loss they felt.³

In accordance with a proclamation of Governor Stone, dated April 15, the people of Des Moines assembled for prayer on Thursday April 27, 1865, at 10 a.m., giving evidence of the loving remembrance in which the name of the martyred President was held by most people in Des Moines. Even the post office was closed between 10 a.m., and 3 p.m.⁴

¹ Ibid., Feb. 23, 1865; Brigham, I, 230-31.

² Daily State Register, April 12, 1865.

³ Brigham, I, 231.

⁴ Ibid., p. 232; Daily State Register, April 27, 1865.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Transportation Improvements Versus the Vicissitudes of Weather and Man

The reality of a railroad connection with Des Moines seemed an eternity in coming. As early as December 1849, a railroad convention was held at Fort Des Moines, at which it was resolved that a committee be appointed from Polk and the adjoining counties to draft and circulate a memorial asking of Congress a grant of land for the purpose of construction of a railroad from Davenport, via Iowa City and Fort Des Moines, to Council Bluffs.¹

Although Des Moines citizens first pinned their hopes on the proposed Davenport to Council Bluffs road (called the "Atlantic and Pacific Railroad"), by the summer of 1851 they also displayed real interest in a proposed road from Keokuk to Fort Des Moines. The editor of the Iowa Star, as other residents at the Raccoon Forks, didn't care which railroad extended to the interior of the state, just so some road did. The farmers and businessmen of the Des Moines River valley needed "an outlet for our surplus produce . . . [for] without such a communication with the Mississippi river, our fertile and beautiful valley will be as a 'barren wilderness.'"²

The nearest route would be from Davenport by Iowa City, a

¹ Iowa Star, Dec. 14, 1849.

² Ibid., July 10, 1851.

practicable route though not so thickly settled as the route up the Des Moines River from Keokuk. "But the want of settlement would be no serious objection, could we but obtain a grant of land from Congress to aid in the construction of the road."¹

Through the unsettled 1850s both roads pushed ahead with organization and construction. In 1852 the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad Company (later called the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific R.R.) was organized to build a railroad from Davenport, and by January 1, 1856, it was completed to Iowa City. In 1853 David W. Kilbourne, William Leighton, and other leading citizens of Keokuk organized a company to construct the Keokuk, Fort Des Moines & Minnesota Railroad up the Des Moines River valley, and by October 1856, had their first train running from Keokuk to Buena Vista station, a distance of three miles. By 1856 it appeared that the Davenport road had a commanding lead in the race to reach central Iowa, especially since that road shared in the Congressional grant of railroad land of that year, and the Keokuk road did not. But in 1858, when progress on both roads was slowed by the Panic of 1857, the Keokuk road was given a boost. The state legislature realized that it was impractical to render the Des Moines River navigable with the proceeds of the grant of land made for that purpose in 1846, and recommended a diversion of the remaining lands to the Keokuk, Fort Des Moines and Minnesota Railroad Company. This request resulted in a grant of over 256,000 acres.²

¹ Ibid., Aug. 7, 1851.

² Faye Erma Harris, "A Frontier Community: The Economic, Social,

By the spring of 1857 the Keokuk road had reached Belfast, 20 miles from Keokuk. To raise additional capital the company sold stock locally to merchants and property owners in towns along the proposed route of the road:

When the railroad company succeeded in building the railroad to one town, the favorable comments of citizens and the press with emphasis on increased trade and profits to the town, made it easier to obtain subscriptions; for the next town or county along the line would promptly contribute to the construction of the railroad.¹

In this way, mostly financed by local capital, the Keokuk, Fort Des Moines & Minnesota Railroad advanced to Bentonsport on August 5, 1857, to Ottumwa in 1860, and to Eddyville by March 1861 (Figure 88).²

The Keokuk, Fort Des Moines & Minnesota Railroad became an official helpmate of the United States Post Office Department on December 28, 1859, when, unopposed by competing bidders, it secured a contract to carry mail the 40 miles from Keokuk to Bentonsport six times a week. Their compensation was \$2,000 per annum to be paid from July 1, 1858, which indicates that they must have begun carrying the mail long before the contract date. Their route, No. 10901, was on November 15, 1860, extended an additional 37 miles to Ottumwa for an additional allowance of \$1,850 per annum. And in 1861 Route No. 10901 was extended to

and Political Development of Keokuk, Iowa from 1820 to 1866," Diss., Univ. of Iowa, 1965, pp. 410-11; Congress did not comply with the state's recommendation until July 12, 1862, but that still gave the Keokuk road enough time to utilize the grant to help it beat the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific R.R. to Des Moines. Ibid., pp. 426-27.

¹ Ibid., p. 413

² Ibid., pp. 414, 423.

Eddyville with the total per annum compensation set at \$9,250. The mail trains were to run the $92\frac{1}{2}$ miles and back from Keokuk "daily, except Sunday, and twice daily, except Sunday, should the trains so run."¹ The superintendent of the railroad would on occasion issue circulars giving mail train schedules, and a handstamp was made to process mail deposited directly on the train (Figure 89).²

Although the Civil War prevented further construction of the Keokuk, Fort Des Moines & Minnesota Railroad for three years, the road had a good local business during this time, as it was making money carrying government troops and supplies (Figure 90). By December 1863, the average receipts of the road were about \$10,000 per week.³

In the spring of 1864, Kilbourne, Leighton & Company of Keokuk changed the name of their company from the Keokuk, Fort Des Moines & Minnesota Railroad, to the Des Moines Valley Railroad. They widely advertised the sale of first mortgage bonds, and continued their push up the Des Moines River valley. By August 1 the rails were laid to Oskaloosa, by the first week in November the road had reached Leighton,

¹ Taken from the following mail contract publications of U.S. Congress: House Exec. Docs. No. 109, 35th Cong., 2nd sess. (serial #1013), p. 746; No. 137, 37th Cong., 2nd sess. (serial #1139), p. 567; No. 82, 37th Cong., 3rd sess. (serial #1164), p. 177.

² The Figure 89 marking, known as Towle 757-S-1, is an odd one because of the word "Independent" at the bottom. It is thought that the word relates to Independence station, the Sept. 1860 terminus of the road. Charles L. Towle and Henry A. Meyer, Railroad Postmarks of the United States, 1861-1886 (Federalburg, Md.: The U.S. Philatelic Classics Soc., 1968), pp. 264-65.

³ Harris, p. 431.

and on December 15, 1864, trains were running to Pella in Marion County. The Kilbourne company, as contractors and lessees of the railroad, sponsored an excursion to Pella with an elaborate party in that city. Resolutions by leading Keokukians expressed admiration for the railroad promoters who had been able to accomplish this feat at a time when other enterprises had failed or were at a standstill.¹

It was at this point, with the road within 42 miles of Des Moines, that businessmen in the capital city realized that the Des Moines Valley was the railroad to fulfill their dreams. They switched their entire allegiance to that road, pledging \$70,000 toward the cost of its completion. Not every Des Moines resident was excited about the coming of the iron horse. One irate citizen wrote the editor of the Register that they had

a quiet, select town, good enough and rich enough fer eny body, and why not keep it so? . . . Don't the slats of iron run right across every road where a man wants to travel? Don't they slide their black ark of a thing snorting along through a man's field, scaring his fat cattle lean, and stunting the groth of the colts and young cattle?²

But local businessmen continued to push the prospect of the great business advantage which was fast approaching their doorsteps. In late September 1865, a committee traveled to Keokuk to complete a contract for the extension of the Des Moines Valley Railroad to Des Moines on or before the last day of December 1868, but with the assurance that with favorable weather the cars would be running to the capital

¹ Ibid., pp. 433-35.

² Iowa State Daily Register, Sept. 3, 1865.

by August 1866. This seemed reasonable as five miles of track had been laid west from Pella, with the workmen putting down the iron at the rate of half a mile a day.¹

On October 5, 1865, Des Moines businessmen met at the court house to confirm the agreement, with two hundred property owners guaranteeing the required \$70,000 by consenting to an assessment of their property for a definite sum. During the meeting, local insurance man and former postmaster Hoyt Sherman entered the room in company with his famous brother General W. T. Sherman. The General spoke and said that twenty years before, when he was on the eve of sailing for California, he had advised his brothers to come to Fort Des Moines:

Now I have the pleasure of coming to see them. I hope and believe that they have been fair samples of the Sherman family [applause]. I hope they may have the privilege of living here a long time yet, and that they may prosper, and leave many of the same name to perpetrate it [laughter and applause].²

Later that month the city council gave the Des Moines Valley Railroad the privilege of building a bridge across the Des Moines River at the foot of Market Street, the right of way on that street on both sides of the river, and also a vacant piece of ground in front of the Union House for a passenger depot.³ With Des Moines support assured, work on the road continued to advance at a steady pace. On October 24, 1865, railroad contractors began grading in Polk County. At about

¹ Ibid., Oct. 4, 1865.

² Ibid., Oct. 4, 7, and 8, 1865.

³ Ibid., Oct. 21, 1865.

the same time D. W. Kilbourne, vice president of the road, was in New York negotiating a contract for the purchase of 2,600 tons of rail iron in England which was to be shipped from Liverpool, by way of New Orleans, in January, February, and March of 1866.¹

As any contractor knows, schedules are seldom adhered to. The ships "Berig" and "South America" did not arrive at New Orleans with the cargo of rails until the middle of May 1866. During the spring of 1866 the iron delivered to New Orleans was slowly transferred to the Mississippi River steamboats "Andy Johnson," "Julia," "Lucy Bertram," "Harry Johnson," "Mary Forsythe," etc. Most of the iron was carried to St. Louis, where it was transferred to different boats for the final haul up to Keokuk. On June 4, 1866, those interested in the railroad received a real scare when a report was received that the "City of Memphis" was burned and sank 40 miles below the town of Memphis, with railroad iron on board. The next day a telegram from St. Louis confirmed that she had railroad iron on board, but that it belonged to the Union Pacific Railroad.²

By the middle of June 1866, the cars were running to Prairie City, just 21 miles from the capital, but expenses were great. The gross estimate for grading alone for the month of May was \$30,801, and the road was experiencing difficulty in getting the cash necessary to pay

¹ Ibid., Oct. 24 and Nov. 5, 1865.

² William Leighton to D. W. Kilbourne, May 22 and 26, June 4 and 5, 1866, D. W. Kilbourne Papers, Iowa State Dept. of History and Archives, Des Moines.

the track layers and surfacers at Prairie City.¹ If this wasn't enough, William Leighton reported to Kilbourne that:

The loss & damage of Freight in March, \$737.13 was partly occasioned by the fire at Eddyville. . . . Stock killing is very expensive and very dangerous to boot, and We are tracing up the Engineers who killed the most, to try and put a stop to it, but there will be more or less of this--in spite of the utmost care--until we get our Road fenced.²

In July 1866, with Des Moines businessmen behind schedule in paying the remaining \$30,000 of their contracted contribution, yet another difficulty arose. John D. McBaine, a Des Moines Valley grading foreman, fled to Missouri with \$5,000 in payroll money, and the railroad hands steadfastly refused to work until they were paid. These last difficulties were finally overcome when Leighton secured a loan of \$5,000 from the Banking House of B. F. Allen of Des Moines, and Kilbourne obtained a loan of \$50,000 from the New York Warehouse and Security Company. Relying on outside funding was onerous, but it had to be done to insure the \$60,000 per month income which the completion of the road to Des Moines would attain.³

Despite problems with every aspect of the project, progress on the construction of the Des Moines Valley Railroad was never brought to a complete halt. By July 9, 1866, track had been laid one and one half miles west of Woodville Station, and half a mile across the Polk

¹ Leighton to Kilbourne, June 11, 1866, Kilbourne Papers.

² Ibid., June 12, 1866.

³ Ibid., July 19 and 28, Aug. 2, 1866; Iowa State Daily Register, July 18 and 29, 1866.

County line, just 15 miles from Des Moines.¹ Late in July the Register crowded:

THE ENGINE WITHIN HEARING! We are told that the blow-pipe of the railroad engine, which is scientifically called a whistle, is within hearing of town. Those people in East Des Moines, who sleep with one ear open, can hear the prodigious braying of the King of the highways every morning at three oclock, each nearer, clearer, deadlier than before! The animal will be at Four Mile Creek in three weeks, where he will pause and gaze with his fiery eye across the Valley of the Des Moines, preparatory to his final lifting of his feet beneath the shadow of the Capitol.²

By August 12, 1866, the trains were running to a point within 8 miles of the capital city, by August 20 they were within 3 miles, and on August 27, 1866, the last rail on the main track was laid into East Des Moines.³ The Register was joyous in its response:

We cannot tell now--nor do we desire to tell--how many residents of Des Moines have been anxiously waiting for a dozen years to catch a glimpse of the Iron Horse speeding this side of Capitol Hill . . . [but] It is here! All doubts have fled! The great triumph has been achieved . . . Israel's God has interposed in behalf of His people. He has encamped round about us, and his everlasting arms have sustained us through long years of discouragement.⁴

Des Moines Valley officials had not planned to have an "opening excursion," but at the last moment the people of Des Moines and Keokuk demanded it. And it was planned on two days' notice, not even enough time to forward an invitation to vice president Kilbourne in New York City. On Thursday, August 29, 1866, Des Moines citizens met at the

¹ Iowa State Daily Register, July 10, 1866.

² Ibid., July 29, 1866.

³ Ibid., Aug. 12 and 22, 1866.

⁴ Ibid., Aug. 29, 1866.

court house at 2 p.m. for what was termed the greatest celebration seen in the city since news was received of the capture of Richmond. A procession was formed in the following order to march to the east-side depot on Market Street:

- 1st Band
- 2nd Mayor, council and city officers
- 3rd Invited guests
- 4th Masonic order
- 5th Odd Fellows
- 6th Good Templars
- 7th Citizens on foot
- 8th Carriages and equestrians.

Greeting the procession at the depot was an excursion train carrying three hundred people from Keokuk, Burlington, Mt. Pleasant, Fairfield, and Agency City. It was pulled by a fine engine, appropriately named "Keokuk" (Figure 91). Riding on the cowcatcher of the locomotive was railroad laborer James Carss. Fifty-nine years later (1925) Carss would participate in another milestone of Des Moines transportation and postal history when he would help to light the runway for the arrival of the first transcontinental airmail plane at Des Moines.¹

The mayor and city council of Keokuk were welcomed in a speech by Congressman John Kasson; Colonel Leighton spoke of the difficulties encountered in completing the railroad, and how creditable to the state it was that the first road to reach the capital had been built by Iowa money. This brought cheer after cheer from the vast assemblage

¹ Ibid., Aug. 12, 29, 30 and 31, 1866; Wm. Leighton to D. W. Kilbourne, Aug. 28 and Sept. 8, 1866, Kilbourne Papers; Des Moines Register, July 2, 1925.

(estimated at 20,000), followed by further speeches, and then some of the crowd walked or rode to the west side of the river for a supper and dance at the Savery House. During the festivities at the Savery House an overjoyed father of a newborn baby called on the railroad officials, and Colonel Leighton reportedly named the child "Valley Road."¹

In November 1866, a second excursion was arranged for the benefit of Des Moines citizens who wished to try the train to Keokuk. D. W. Kilbourne came to Des Moines to help make the arrangements and to give out free tickets for an extended St. Louis excursion on the Keokuk Packet Line. While in Des Moines Kilbourne told the Register that the completed railroad was well built--that the iron was subjected to a critical inspection in England, and that more ties to the mile (by over 300) were laid than by any other railroad company then in operation. He also indicated that two more engines and two passenger cars had recently been purchased in the East. Even so, he felt that business justified the purchase of five locomotives in addition to the fifteen then in operation, as well as six more passenger cars, and two hundred freight cars.²

The completion of the Des Moines Valley R.R. reestablished Des Moines' commercial ties with St. Louis. In fact, Des Moines officials tried to use this development as leverage to get Chicago merchants

¹ Iowa State Daily Register, Aug. 30 and 31, 1866.

² Ibid., Nov. 14 and 23, 1866.

to finance a direct Des Moines rail connection to the windy city in the form of a branch line from Des Moines to Ames Station on the Chicago and North Western line. When Mayor Cleveland returned from Chicago after failing to win such support the Register commented:

Perhaps they think our merchants will continue to purchase there, as they have done heretofore, without any effort on their part. Perhaps they will; but at present our connection with St. Louis leads us to inquire into the advantages of that market, and there is no getting around the fact that when it shall secure the proper connections by River and Ocean with New York, it will possess advantages unsurpassed. . . . Chicago will not control the trade of central Iowa without a big effort.¹

The most important result of the completion of the Des Moines Valley R.R. was the stimulation of local business. By October 1866, hotels were doing double the amount of business they were having earlier in the year, new business houses of every sort were being established, and the city was flooded with a new stock of goods--much of which was,

to supply the whole country south and west for a considerable distance. Obtaining their goods by rail in quick time without reshipment by wagons as heretofore . . . our heavy dealers are able to do as well or better by country merchants than any firms east of this point.²

The only disadvantage of the railroad which the Register noted was the increased number of thieves brought into town by the easy means of travel.³

To test the effectiveness of the Des Moines Valley R.R. as a means of personal travel three Des Moines businessmen in Chicago decided to

¹ Ibid., Sept. 9, 1866.

² Ibid., Oct. 6, 1866.

³ Ibid., Sept. 25, 1866.

each return by way of a different railroad. One went through Clinton on the Chicago and North Western, one came through Davenport and Newton on the still incomplete Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific, and one came up through Keokuk on the Des Moines Valley R.R. The Des Moines Valley traveler arrived eleven hours in advance of the others!¹

Although passengers came right through on the Des Moines Valley R.R. without delay, the mail did not. In June 1866, Postmaster Teesdale arranged to have the Chicago and eastern mail brought by way of the Keokuk road, instead of the Chicago and Rock Island line. The first effect of the change was a failure of the eastern mail for two successive days. When it finally started to come, it was twenty-four hours late. The alleged cause of this delay was the fact that the mail train did not leave Keokuk until twenty-four hours after the arrival of the mail train from Chicago. Passengers could come straight through, but the mail was compelled to stop, because the first train west of the Mississippi was simply an accommodation and not a mail train. Teesdale expressed concern that unless an improvement could be effected the completion of the Keokuk road would not bring any improvement in the city's mail facilities.²

Teesdale switched the eastern mail from Keokuk to the Burlington & Missouri River R.R. (which connected with the Des Moines Valley at Ottumwa); but the failures were so frequent in the fall of 1866, that

¹ Ibid., Sept. 11, 1866.

² Ibid., July 12, 1866.

he was driven to sending it through Keokuk again, having had assurances that Des Moines could get its mail by the 6 o'clock p.m. train. When this change brought two evenings without mail the frustrated postmaster said:

If the remedy is not immediately secured, we must again trust to stage connections [to the terminus of either of the Chicago roads], and get the mail in the morning as we did before we had a Railroad connection.¹

The mail trains of the Des Moines Valley R.R. may not at first have done a thing for the improvement of delivery of out-of-state eastern mail to the capital city, but they did greatly facilitate the delivery of in-state mail up and down the Des Moines River valley. By 1866 the Towle 757-A-1 marking (Figures 92-93) was being applied by the Des Moines Valley route agent to all such mail posted on the train instead of in local post offices. It is a peculiar marking--the only Iowa railroad postmark to show the state name at the bottom, in the same fashion as a regular town postmark.

The arrival of the railroad was only one of many municipal improvements which contributed to an explosion of local pride and self-confidence as the capital city entered the postwar era. In May 1865, Mills & Company announced plans to publish the city's first directory, and on June 24, 1865, the city was lit up by the newly-installed gas lighting system, giving it, as the Register said, "a general resemblance to the other great cities of the globe."² The

¹ Ibid., Dec. 30, 1866.

² Ibid., May 28, 1865.

flourishing foundries and machine shops in operation by the summer of 1865 were producing plows, reapers, mowers, and other agricultural implements which drew buyers from 150 miles away.¹

Increased commerce placed quite a strain on the Court Avenue toll bridge, the city's only Des Moines River bridge. In March 1866, prominent citizens, promoting the idea of a free bridge and fearful of the calamity that would befall the community if something should happen to the Court Avenue span, met to authorize the construction of a second, free bridge over the Des Moines at Walnut Street. The county contributed \$9,000 toward the project, and the building committee confidently set out to raise the remaining \$17,000 by private subscription. Messrs. John M. and H. E. Neaffie of Clinton were hired to construct the 605 foot structure. They had spent the greater part of the war building bridges for the Army of the Potomac, and decided to use the Howe truss design with which they were familiar.²

By the end of July 1866, the first span was completed, and spectators lining the river bank could readily perceive the overall design (Figure 94) which provided a 5-foot pedestrian walk on each side of a 16-foot wagon track. The bridge, constructed of yellow pine and 15 tons of iron rods and bolts, was completed by the middle of August 1866, but the bridge committee had failed in its efforts to raise the remaining construction funds. Perhaps it had overestimated the community's

¹ Daily State Register, June 29, 1865.

² Ibid., March 9 and July 31, 1866.

ability to financially absorb such an improvement, coming as it did at the same time that many people were heavily obligated by pledges of support to the Des Moines Valley Railroad. Lacking payment, the bridge company placed a lien on their handiwork and vowed to retain possession of the bridge (allowing no person or vehicle to cross) until the company was paid for its work.¹

The committee finally borrowed the necessary money from local banks, but when the bridge was opened to the public in late October 1866, the heavy financial accountability made toll charges a necessity (Figure 95). Despite the difficulties encountered in its construction, the new bridge was warmly greeted, both for the added convenience it offered and for the business boom it generated up and down Walnut Street.²

Politically, the postwar era ushered in radical Republicanism. This opportunistic and generally reprehensible viewpoint of the dominant political party ignored Abraham Lincoln's admonition to show malice toward none and charity toward all. Instead, the postwar Republican party in Des Moines, as well as across the Midwest, saw a real opportunity to dominate politics and the purse strings of government by intensifying its attack on local Democrats, and even labeling moderate

¹ Ibid., July 31 and Aug. 15-16, 1866.

² Ibid., Aug. 15, Oct. 9, 12, and 20, 1866; When the bridge debt was paid in Nov. 1867 the toll charges were dropped, but the free bridge would not be enjoyed for long. On Sept. 3, 1869 it collapsed under the weight of one hundred head of Texas horses which a Mr. Cummings was bringing to East Des Moines for feeding. Ibid., Nov. 30, 1867, and Sept. 4, 1869.

Republicans as traitors. The first evidence of this political power grab appeared in the Register in the fall of 1865. It took the form of a crude anti-Democratic cartoon (Figure 96), and a number of verbal outbursts, one of which was aimed at the local lecture association. The association had distributed a program listing Representative J. A. Kasson, Dr. Holland, Rev. E. Chapin, G. W. Curtis, Bayard Taylor, Dan Voorhies, A. Ward, Wendell Phillips, and Clement L. Vallandigham. To this the Republican Register replied:

You may take our hat, Mr. Lecture Association. We have no further use for it. If Dan Voorhies, and Wendell Phillips, and Clement L. Vallandigham shall pay this town a visit and give it the benefit of their lectures, Divine grace will not save Des Moines from an overthrow worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah! . . .

We are very well aware that a majority of the Committee were not particularly patriotic during the war; and they will of course do their best to secure the literary services of men who have thought and now think like themselves. . . . The citizens of this place . . . will see this self-styled Lecture Association in the Bottomless Pit before they will patronize it while it is linked in any form with acknowledged and notorious traitors.¹

In the mayoral campaign of February-March 1866, Republican Mayor Cleveland was challenged by S. F. Spofford, the Democratic proprietor of the Demoine House. Spofford was villainized by the Register which, although allowing that he was sociably and personally beloved, said:

The voters of this city will not elect a man to office who applauded Vallandigham for his treasons, and who gave his doorstep to Henry Clay Dean as a rostrum whereon to curse the administration. . . . Conspirators did not all die when assassin of President Lincoln fell by the hand of a Federal soldier. Some of them still live in Des Moines, and their malignity toward the

¹ Ibid., Oct. 29, 1865.

old Flag is just as evident to-day as it was when they mourned over the Union victory at Corinth, and exulted over the Quantrel murders at Lawrence. They can talk Union as flippantly as Pollard of Virginia, while in their hearts they have no sympathy with the Government.¹

Other than the occasional Register complaint that President Andrew Johnson's postmasters were holding up the delivery of the radical Register, the new politics of vengeance and personal aggrandizement did not greatly affect the Des Moines post office in the period 1865-1866. Soon it would--alternately dominating post office politics for the next thirty years. But the concerns of the Des Moines post office in the late spring and summer of 1865 (the proverbial calm before the storm) were simple, everyday business problems--loafers blocking the post office doorway, and the advertisement of a large number of wandering letters addressed to returned soldiers. There was also the external problem of occasional pistol shots fired in front of the post office on Saturday nights.²

In September 1865, plans were announced to build a new post office building behind Sherman Block on Third Street. Work on the new 60 by 22-foot frame building, going up on the former site of Charles Gamp's barber shop, was well advanced by mid October.³ Just before the building (Figure 97) was put into service on January 1, 1866, the Register reported that it "liked the appearance of matters." The 1280

¹ Ibid., March 3 and 7, 1866.

² Ibid., June 9, Aug. 29, Sept. 12, 1865, and Sept. 22, 1866.

³ Ibid., Sept. 14, and Oct. 14, 1865.

boxes and drawers were arranged in a very convenient manner, and Postmaster Teesdale's public standing remained high after nearly five years on the job,

he has labored effectively and acceptably in one of the most onerous public positions in which a man can be placed. If there have been complaints, they must have been of a very quiet character, for we never heard of them.¹

After only a year of service the new post office building was filthy with cobwebs and dust, and the Register again praised Teesdale for having the interior entirely whitewashed,

[he] is a lover of order, neatness and shining walls. . . . If he has any whitewash left, we recommend that a coat of it be put on the clerk down there who made the suggestive remark that "they were just setting an example for some housewives of his acquaintance to follow!"²

On March 1, 1866, Teesdale almost lost his new post office to a fire which destroyed four adjoining business buildings. The flames blew toward the post office, heating the building to a dangerous level. Everything inside was hurriedly packed up, ready to carry out at a moment's notice. But the wet blankets and carpets placed on the roof saved the structure.³

Except for this exciting day, Teesdale spent the last two years of his postmastership fighting many of the same old problems he had struggled with the first five years. One of the most annoying of these was the frequent failure of the mails due to adverse weather conditions.

¹ Ibid., Dec. 15, 1865.

² Ibid., March 8, 1867.

³ Ibid., March 2, 1866.

Mail schedules and means of transportation had improved, but who could improve the weather! When the rain-swollen Skunk River bottom tore the front wheels off the Grinnell mail coach the Register commented:

Persons who are inclined to complain of the want of promptitude in the arrival of mails, will remember, if they please, that a series of forty thunder storms within twenty-four hours, is not included in a list of mail facilities.¹

Even railroad mail deliveries were upset when heavy rains washed away bridges and winter snows created eight-foot drifts across railway cuts. During the period January-March 1867, there were at least ten days on which no Des Moines Valley trains arrived with Eastern mail.² Twenty years before Fort Des Moines residents, used to weekly deliveries when the mail was on time, wouldn't have given a three-day delay a second thought. But improved service brings greater demands, and in 1867 Des Moines denizens found a three-day delay so intolerable that they nearly drove postal clerks crazy with their fidgeting! The Register editor reported that:

People have swarmed to the Post Office for mail and swarmed back again without it. One of the clerks in that institution, whose veracity is as true as a psalm book's informed us last night that in the last three days he had been asked "when the mail would be in" just 37,000 times, and 37,000 times he had replied "he didn't know." Last night we called in to ascertain the true situation of mail matters. Seeing Hi. Smith standing back in his usual place, we blurted out "Do you know when the mail is coming in?" His jaws moved spasmodically, but no words fell on our ears--the poor fellow had stood there all day answering that question until he had wore his voice out, and all he could do was

¹ Ibid., June 21, 1865.

² Ibid., July 14, 1865; Jan. 27, 29, Feb. 15, 22, 24, and March 14, 1867.

to point desperately at a placard hanging up in the middle of the room and gasp out, "Look there!" We looked. In big, broad letters we read-- "Eastern mail not in! Ask no questions!"¹

Passengers from one of the Des Moines Valley trains stranded near Woodville trickled into town with the story of how they had hired teams and shoveled their way through. As to the mail:

They left the mail and mail agent . . . "alone in their glory" with a scant supply of wood but a full supply of courage. The train was nearly hid from view in the drift and the water in the boiler of the engine frozen solid.²

When an overdue mail did finally arrive the pushing and shoving of the post office crowd jeopardized any ladies present. As the Register put it:

Some men who bow and scrape and simper and fawn in a drawing room until their politeness becomes disgusting forget all about their Chesterfieldian manners when it comes to a practical test in a crowded mail delivery.³

Teesdale continued, without much success, to try and improve the delivery of railroad mail under normal scheduling. After continued disappointment with the Des Moines Valley schedule, Teesdale on January 4, 1867, switched the Chicago mail to the Chicago & Rock Island Railroad, whose officials promised to transfer the mail to stagecoaches if the trains should become snowbound. But when experience proved that stages could seldom cross the ice on the Skunk River, Teesdale

¹ Ibid., Jan. 27, 1867.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., Feb. 19, 1867.

switched the Chicago mail back to the Des Moines Valley road, via the Burlington & Missouri.¹

Responsibility for a smoothly run postal system did not rest entirely with the postmaster and his clerks; the public had its part to play. Teesdale sometimes turned to the Register as an effective means of instructing post office patrons of their "duty." In November 1866, he strongly urged them to have their correspondents address them by the number of their post office box. This was particularly important in a community which had yet to inaugurate free, house-to-house, city delivery. Teesdale pointed out that the inclusion of a box number in the address would

enable the clerks to distribute much faster, with far less liability to mistake. Where the Smith family is numbered by hundreds and the Browns are as numerous as the streets of the city, and a member of Mr. Jones' family is met at every corner, it takes some reflection, even where there is a perfect familiarity with all, to determine just where a letter belongs, and reflection consumes time, and want of reflection leads to errors.²

On other occasions Teesdale warned against depositing unpaid letters at the office. Early in 1865 Post Office Department policy was changed so that unstamped letters were sent to the Dead Letter Office in Washington, and partly prepaid letters were forwarded to their destination with the deficiency to be paid by the recipient. Teesdale found insufficient postage to be particularly troublesome in relation

¹ Ibid., Jan. 5, Feb. 12-13, 22, and April 7, 1867.

² Ibid., Nov. 11, 1866; Although city free delivery was established in 1863, it was at this time still limited to those cities having a population of at least 50,000. Fuller, p. 71.

to newspapers. He warned that newspapers required a 2¢ stamp, that a 1¢ stamp only carried them to the waste box. Also, drop letters (Figure 98), though normally requiring only a 1¢ stamp, did require a 2¢ stamp if they contained more than two circulars.¹ The drop-letter rate promoted a great deal of business advertisement, so much so that in 1866 the Register voiced its first complaint against "junk mail":

The instigators of a certain "sell" who have been flooding the mails with their slips of papers, will merely have the satisfaction of seeing that their low-sittd intentions grin so plainly out of a poorly-constructed ground-work that the biggest fool this side of Jebberelgeard could see through the cobwebs so bunglingly thrown over it.²

Late in 1866 the official status of the Des Moines post office was changed from second-class to first-class. This was done with good reason. The population of the city, 5,722 in 1865, had jumped to 10,511 in 1867. On a single day (Wednesday, June 20, 1866) 755 people called at the post office for their mail. During the same year about 4,500 letters were received weekly at the Des Moines post office, and a like number sent from it, 5,000 daily newspapers were received each quarter, and money order receipts had grown to \$13,000 a year. On February 14, 1867, about 9,000 valentines passed through the office.³

Throughout the greater part of these boom years in the city's history Des Moines postal clerks continued to employ the small Type 10

¹ Daily State Register, June 27, 1865, and May 7, 15, 1867.

² Ibid., Nov. 23, 1866.

³ Ibid., June 22, 1866, Jan. 1, 8, Feb. 15, 1867; Historical and Comparative Census of Iowa, p. 567.

postmark (Figures 98-100). But sometime during the winter of 1866-1867 a new Type 11 was introduced (Figure 101). It is $1\frac{1}{2}$ mm larger than Type 10, and instead of using the standard target killer it introduced a variety of cut-cork killers, a style that would sweep the country in the 1870s.

With population and postal growth what it was in 1865-1867, it was inevitable that the problem of mail theft should eventually appear. The first case involved not a postal clerk, but a local man named Henry Hendrickson who was convicted of obtaining letters from the post office belonging to other parties, and breaking them open.¹

A more serious case was that of money being taken from letters before they reached the Des Moines post office. The problem was first brought to the public's attention in November 1865, when the Register told of the Guthrie County Treasurer losing \$102.50 in the mail between Guthrie Center and Des Moines. Merchants at Guthrie Center had suffered similar losses, to the point where they were afraid to entrust any but unsealed letters to the mail. The Register sympathized, and added that, "the chap who filches money from the United States mails, must be smart indeed if he shall not be sooner or later overhauled."² Postmaster Teesdale also took notice, advising the Register editor that,

the department has been duly notified, and has ample time to take action. Several other facts . . . show that there are systematic

¹ Daily State Register, May 15, 1866.

² Ibid., Nov. 28, 1865.

depredations on the mail at some point west of us. I have no idea where the mischief is done, but will spare no pains to ferret it out.¹

The furor of publicity concerning the problem brought defensive letters from central Iowa postmasters who sought to convince the public that their offices were free of any blame in the matter. S. B. Hempstead, postmaster at Adel (midway between Guthrie Center and Des Moines) wrote that he had long been aware "that there was a wrong somewhere."² He said that in testing the mail himself he lost one letter and had another letter reach Des Moines in four weeks time--in another envelope with a stamp obliterated with black ink. And, he added,

every person in the Post offices in this part of the State, knows that I have for many months used red ink only. There are some other cases of which I might speak; but enough is already said to satisfy any reasonable person that there is something wrong East of this, as well as West of the Capital.³

S. H. Pestal, postmaster at Boone (a small office midway between Adel and Des Moines) wrote that because some had concluded that Boone was the point where the depredation was committed, he wished to state that mail for his office and no other

is put up in a small sack or bag, separate from any other mail matter, consequently we have no access to any mail matter whatever, only such as properly belongs to this office. This I say that the public may not be misled.⁴

¹ Ibid., Nov. 29, 1865.

² Ibid., Dec. 3, 1865.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., Dec. 6, 1865; The office at Boone (Dallas County) was

Not surprisingly, considering the large amount of publicity, the depredations ceased for a time. Yet N. C. Deering, U.S. Mail Agent for Iowa, was assigned to the case and after six months time was provided with new evidence in the form of renewed thievery. He patiently carried out his investigation using decoy letters. His careful county-by-county process of elimination took time, but finally paid off.

On May 4, 1867, Deering traveled by stage from Panora, east through Redfield and Adel, to Des Moines. At Redfield he mailed a letter to an insurance agent at Lyons in eastern Iowa. Into the letter Deering placed a marked \$20 and two \$1 bills, carefully noting the names of the issuing banks, numbers of the bills, etc. He later failed to find the letter in the mail at Des Moines and on Monday, May 6, 1867, accompanied by the U.S. Marshal, traveled to Adel where they arrested and searched Postmaster Hempstead! On his person they found several hundred dollars, and with it the three marked bills, which Mail Agent Deering recognized! The Register reported that:

Hempstead declared his innocence, but could not account for the marked money. In his attempt to remove from his pocket to a waste paper box a handful of letters, he was detected, and the letters were taken by the Marshal. These letters purporting to contain various sums of money, were directed to County Treasurers and other persons living west of this. There were also found laid away in his office a quantity of letters most of which had evidently contained money. Three of them enclosed drafts--one for \$40. One draft was a duplicate, the original having been lost in the mails, and now the duplicate shared the same fate. It appears

established Aug. 16, 1852, and on Feb. 9, 1871 changed its name to Booneville. The present-day office of Boone (Boone County) was established Feb. 5, 1866 under the name Boone Station, changed to Montana Aug. 24, 1866, and on March 13, 1871 changed to Boone. Appointments.

that this work had been carried on with considerable skill, and Mr. Hempstead had become reckless and careless in his operations.

His friends, soon after his arrest, signed a bond for his appearance on Tuesday noon in the sum of \$10,000. After consulting with the Marshal, and finding out the character of the evidence against him, they became uneasy, had him re-arrested and placed under guard . . . his wife--said to be a woman of excellent qualities and refined character--was perfectly terror-stricken, and prostrated by the occurrence.¹

¹ Daily State Register, May 8 and 12, 1867; Hempstead was brought to Des Moines and then transferred to the state penitentiary at Fort Madison to await the next term of the U.S. Circuit Court. He never stood trial, however, for on August 10, 1867, he and several other prisoners escaped by removing a piece of unsecured wall iron in a privy and digging a large stone block from the wall. Ibid., June 4 and Aug. 14-15, 1867.

CHAPTER EIGHT

George C. Tichenor, Politician Extraordinary

As winter faded into the spring of 1867 Des Moines Postmaster John Teesdale felt secure in his office. The Register had for the past year made much of loyal (i.e. radical) Iowa postmasters resigning rather than serving under the administration of ultra-conservative Andrew Johnson. But no Republican postmaster in central Iowa had yet been forced to resign.¹

In August 1866 a rumor swept the streets of Des Moines that Teesdale was about to be replaced by John Browne, a Democrat, but nothing came of it. Teesdale was appointed for a second term by the recommendation of nearly all the leading Republicans and businessmen of Des Moines, and had served but fifteen months since his confirmation. He had faithfully performed the duties of his office, and besides, the Tenure of Office bill had been enacted into law March 2, 1867. This act was designed to greatly restrict the appointing and removing power of President Johnson by requiring Senate consent for all removals. And Teesdale relied on Iowa's Fifth District representative John A.

¹ Ibid., March 29, Sept. 9, Oct. 26, and Nov. 29, 1866; Andrew Johnson, a former Democratic senator from Tennessee, was in 1864 elected as a War Democrat to fill the position of Vice President on the Republican ticket headed by Lincoln. Shortly after his succession to the Presidency severe differences arose between Johnson and the Republican congress. These altercations culminated in the impeachment trial of 1868.

Kasson, a long-time political ally, to look after his interests in Congress.¹

What Teesdale didn't realize was that his position was being undermined by actions within his own party. The chief architect of Teesdale's ill fortune was his former clerk George C. Tichenor (Figure 102). Because the behind-the-scenes story of Tichenor's political appointment is better preserved than that of any other Des Moines postmaster it seems appropriate to explore it in some detail.

Tichenor, a native of Kentucky, came to Des Moines in 1859 at the age of 21. A Democrat, he served briefly as a district court clerk, and then worked as a postal clerk under postmasters Shaw, Redhead, and Teesdale--until local Republicans had him ousted. Tichenor was the type of man to hold a fierce grudge and, in light of later developments, Teesdale and his Republican friends (especially John Kasson) would have been much better off if they had allowed Tichenor to keep his post office job. But the seed of hostility was sown, and on September 15, 1862 Tichenor accepted an appointment as adjutant of the Thirty-Ninth Iowa Infantry. In time he found himself desiring something better, and in the summer of 1863 Tichenor used the influence

¹ Ibid., Aug. 18, and Sept. 1, 1866; John Teesdale to Grenville Dodge, April 29, 1867, Grenville Dodge Papers, Iowa State Dept. of History and Archives, Des Moines; Strangely enough, the Register's reporting of the Browne rumor was somewhat cheerful: "his votes have been uniformly on the side of the Copperheads. Still, he is not half as obnoxious to Republicans as many other men we could name. We think he will make rather an obliging and accommodating officer." Register, Sept. 1, 1866; Browne, a native of Wales, was at this time in charge of the Des Moines Navigation and Railroad Company. The History of Polk County, Iowa, p. 777.

of Herbert M. Hoxie (U.S. marshal for Iowa) to win an appointment as aide-de-camp of Brigadier General Grenville M. Dodge.¹

The resulting friendship which developed between the ambitious Tichenor and the even more ambitious Dodge, would influence Iowa politics for the next ten years. Dodge's biographer points out that although the General had political friends who were smarter and more daring, the handsome, five-foot-nine-inch Tichenor ("a political intriguer and office seeker of the rankest sort") wielded the greatest influence.²

Before the war ended Dodge was able to wrangle a majority for Tichenor.³ But Tichenor was not enamored of a military career; instead he was preoccupied with thoughts of a gainful postwar, civilian position. On February 14, 1865 (eight months before his resignation from the army) he got Colonel Cyrus Carpenter, a former state legislator, to write strong letters to Iowa representative John Kasson, Herbert Hoxie, and Register editor Frank Palmer recommending Tichenor for the postmastership of Des Moines. Tichenor urged Carpenter to stress "the importance" of giving "our officers and soldiers" a share "in the

¹ Stanley P. Hirshson, Grenville M. Dodge: Soldier, Politician, Railroad Pioneer (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1967), p. 78; Roster and Records of Iowa Soldiers In the War of the Rebellion, V (Des Moines: State of Iowa, 1908-1911), 949; John Teesdale to Dodge, April 29, 1867, Dodge Papers.

² Hirshson, p. 78.

³ Roster and Records of Iowa Soldiers, V, 949; Three months after Tichenor's resignation Dodge had him further promoted to brevet colonel. Tichenor to Dodge, Jan. 14, 1866, Dodge Papers.

distribution of public favors." "Poor in purse and bankrupt in health," Tichenor was suffering from dysentery and needed the job.¹ He was also thirsting for revenge against his old employer.

A brief visit to Des Moines in April 1865 disillusioned Tichenor. Although he had an infant son to support and now adhered to the Republican party, he found no good prospect of employment. In his characteristic vituperative fashion he wrote Carpenter that:

The present race of soulless, unscrupulous, grasping, greedy politicians have got to be dragged from place & power before we soldiers have any show whatever. They have, like craven cowards and petty sneaks & shirks, remained quietly at home enjoying their ease, filling their pockets & seizing & holding the offices--while the real patriots of the land have yielded up their lives--or hazzarded their all, for the country--and they are now holding with a death grasp to the places & power which thank God they will soon lose.²

Although he had been rebuffed in his bid for immediate appointment as postmaster at Des Moines Tichenor had talked to John Kasson and solicited his promise of the appointment by February 1, 1866 (when Teesdale's first term would expire).³

Restless, yet fearful of the loss of his military pay and influence, Tichenor returned to his army job on Dodge's staff in St. Louis and then Fort Leavenworth. While thus employed Tichenor used the influence of George E. Spencer (Dodge's assistant adjutant) in an attempt

¹ Hirshson, p. 118.

² Tichenor to Carpenter, May 10, 1865, quoted in Mildred Throne, Cyrus Clay Carpenter and Iowa Politics, 1854-1898 (Iowa City: The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1974), p. 76.

³ Tichenor to Dodge, Dec. 6, 1865, Dodge Papers.

to get President Johnson to appoint him to an Alabama post.¹ When this effort fell through Tichenor decided it was finally time to leave the army. Upon his resignation in late October 1865, Tichenor returned to Des Moines and asked Dodge to do what he could in the way of providing a job:

I am willing to do most anything that is honorable and that would pay Me something. . . . I would like the Post Office at this place, on account of my wife as owing to her health she desires to be with her Mother, and there does not seem to be any other opening here. I call this an "opening" as I learn that the present incumbent will be removed--Did you ever speak to Kasson about it?²

Tichenor finally went to work in his father-in-law's lumber business. The firm's letterhead read "GETCHELL & TICHENOR, Dealers in Lumber, Wood, Shingles, Sash, Doors, &c.," but if the number of letters that continued to flow to Dodge are any indication, Tichenor had trouble keeping his mind on lumber. He did ask Dodge to use his Union Pacific Railroad influence to get the Chicago & Rock Island to grant Getchell & Tichenor rates below other Des Moines lumber dealers, but for the most part his letters pertained to his continuous search for a more lucrative job. He queried Dodge about an opening for clerk in the state circuit court, about being appointed agent for the Chicago & Rock Island, the collectorship in Des Moines, the state marshalship,

¹ Hirshson, p. 129; Spencer, a former secretary of the Iowa State Senate, recruited the 1st Alabama cavalry regiment (white) in 1863. In 1867 he was appointed register in bankruptcy for the 4th district of Alabama, and was subsequently elected to two terms (1868-79) as U.S. senator (Republican) from Alabama. National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, XIII (New York: James T. White & Co., 1906), p. 72.

² Tichenor to Dodge, Nov. 16, 1865, Dodge Papers.

and even a position on the new Inspection Board of the War Department's Indian Bureau.¹

But most of all Tichenor wanted John Teesdale's job as postmaster. When Kasson's promised appointment date drew near without any hint of the desired action Tichenor realized he had merely been paid lip service and was furious. "Kasson ought to have given Me this Post Office, he has treated me badly, and I intend that he shall be beat for Congressman next election."²

Tichenor's method of ousting Kasson was to try and convince Dodge to run against him. "Whether you are a candidate or not--[I'll] do all in my power against Kasson, he treated me shabbily and I shall pay him off at all hazzards." "I will move Heaven and Earth against him--and I know when and how to strike Effectively." In April 1866 Dodge agreed to run and Tichenor and Frank Palmer immediately proceeded to dig up and publicize a highly embellished and derogatory story of Kasson's recent divorce. Tichenor, who was later to be twice divorced, spread the word that Kasson's "most shameful infidelity and scandalous conduct" rendered him unfit for office.³

By this type of dirty, personal politics, as well as the securing of a delegate's vital marginal vote by the promise of a railroad job,

¹ Tichenor to Dodge, Dec. 6, 1865, June 27 and July 14, 1866; Jan. 9, Feb. 3 and March 12, 1867, Dodge Papers.

² Tichenor to Dodge, Jan. 14, 1866, Dodge Papers.

³ Tichenor to Dodge, Nov. 29 and Dec. 6, 1865, Dodge Papers: Hirshson, p. 132.

Dodge and his supporters were able to defeat Kasson in the June 1866 primary election. From this point forward George Tichenor shared in the power structure of the Republican party in western Iowa, and the postmastership of John Teesdale was on tenuous ground. This is not to say that it would now be easy for Tichenor to oust his former boss from the post office, but from this point he knew the accomplishment of the task to be possible, and he worked all the harder toward that end.

When the results of the general election of October 1866 showed Dodge the winner by a large margin over the Democratic candidate James M. Tuttle, Tichenor and Dodge's other political friends pressed in for the pay-off. Tichenor immediately wrote Dodge "I want you to go to Washington & make friends with Johnson, for the purpose of turning every d.....d scoundrel [Teesdale] that bolted [voted for Kasson against Dodge in the primary election] out of office."¹ Tichenor advised Dodge that since he was limited in capital he would prefer a lucrative situation, and pleaded with Dodge to be allowed to accompany him to Washington, where he felt sure the general could use his influence to get the postmastership. "You know I have the requisite qualifications of the present regime having been a War Democrat and a soldier."²

To insure that Andrew Johnson would not block his planned

¹ Tichenor to Dodge, Oct. 12, 1866, Dodge Papers.

² Tichenor to Dodge, Jan. 9, 1867, Dodge Papers.

appointment Tichenor wrote the President an eight-page letter assuring him of his support as well as that of other Southerners now living in the North. Feigning much solicitude for the condition of the country Tichenor recommended that Johnson secure the good will and cooperation of the radicals by moderating the tone of his conduct toward them,

receive their recommendations for appointments to offices within your gift favorably--accept their suggestions kindly . . . assume the attitude, not of an open enemy of the Republican party, but of a leader in that party. . . . The radical party of the North is now under the control of Army men--they hold & govern it--So far as in your power appoint to office prominent army men who have been & are identified with the radical party. . . . I have been more readily encouraged to write this by the hope that you will remember me as having met you at times in Nashville, when I was serving as a Staff officer in Tennessee.¹

Tichenor continued to complain to Dodge that none of the federal offices in Des Moines were held by soldiers, but "by men who have always been public pensioners--while disabled, gallant, efficient, & poor officers & Soldiers are out of Employment."² He urged Dodge to look after these matters before the Tenure of Office Bill should become law. Tichenor was especially worried that Kasson was still at work keeping "his pimps" in office. "I tell you that you Must Make Vigorous War upon them."³

¹ Tichenor to Andrew Johnson, Feb. 15, 1867, Andrew Johnson Papers, Library of Congress (Reel 26); Tichenor's pretended friendship with President Johnson seems even more incredible considering that less than a year before Tichenor had referred to the President as "his Apostate Majesty . . . drunken Andy." Tichenor to Dodge, March 31, 1866, Dodge Papers.

² Tichenor to Dodge, March 1, 1867, Dodge Papers.

³ Tichenor to Dodge, March 14, 1867, Dodge Papers

Tichenor professed to know that Johnson would promptly nominate him to any office that Dodge or the Iowa delegation should recommend for him. "I am More radical than ever, but Johnson has been made to believe Me his friend."¹ Moreover, Tichenor could not see why Johnson would not want Teesdale removed:

Teesdale is in favor of impeachment & the fiercest of Radicals--although he voted against you last fall. He entertained both Windell Phillips and Fred Douglass when they were here recently.²

But most of all Tichenor urged haste:

If the Marshalship is disposed of--he [President Johnson] would make me Pension Agent here or Post Master--if . . . Teesdale can be removed by the Senate's consent. . . . For Gods sake take hold of the matter--I want the Pup put out--and want the place Myself.³

All of Tichenor's prodding was not without effect. On March 12, 1867 Dodge wrote O. H. Browning, Secretary of the Interior, urgently requesting that Tichenor be appointed Pension Agent at Des Moines. Learning that a new agent had already been appointed Dodge, on March 25, 1867, wrote to Postmaster General Alexander Randall asking that Tichenor be appointed postmaster at Des Moines (Figure 103).⁴

At this point the "plot thickened." Randall didn't say no to Dodge's request; he simply left the matter dangling in order to deal

¹ Tichenor to Dodge, March 12, 1867, Dodge Papers.

² Tichenor to Dodge, March 30, 1867, Dodge Paper.

³ Tichenor to Dodge, March 12, 1867, Dodge Papers. On March 30, 1867 Tichenor again implored Dodge "For God sake push the Post Master Matter to success--Use every means necessary, tell them what you please about Me."

⁴ Dodge's letters to Browning and Randall are in the Dodge Papers.

with other contenders. Frank Palmer of the Register, not knowing that Dodge was going to put forward Tichenor's name for postmaster, had recommended Deputy Treasurer of State Isaac Brandt for the job. Nor was just-ousted representative John Kasson idle in the matter; he returned to Washington to vigorously support the retention of his old friend Teesdale. Dodge complained to his wife that Kasson was "watching to see that I do not get any of his pets out of office. He has the inside track with all the Departments, Andy, &c., and gets pretty much what he wants."¹

To circumvent the roadblock to Tichenor's nomination Dodge got Thomas Ewing Jr. (son of Ohio's Senator Ewing) to intercede with Randall. Ewing did what he could and had former Iowa Supreme Court justice Charles Mason, a Democrat, call on Randall. Ewing also recommended that Dodge telegraph Thomas H. Benton, Jr., Iowa Assessor of Internal Revenue and a Johnson supporter, asking his recommendation of Tichenor. Benton subsequently acquiesced to Dodge's appeal even though his first choice for the position had been a Captain Cross.²

Postmaster General Randall finally gave Tichenor his approval, and the appointment was confirmed by the Senate on April 17, 1867. Tichenor's reaction to the telegraphed news was a hurried letter of "God bless you" to Dodge (Figure 104). But John Teesdale would not lie

¹ Hirshson, p. 149.

² Thomas Ewing, Jr. to Dodge, April 6, 1867; Tichenor to Dodge, March 30 and April 14, 1867; Thomas H. Benton, Jr. to Dodge, April 16, 1867, all in Dodge Papers.

down without a fight. On April 18, 1867, he had influential Des Moines friends send telegrams of such strong protest that Iowa Senator James Harlan had Tichenor's case called up for reconsideration! Tichenor, desperate and ever vigilant, countered this last threat by a compromise previously discussed with Dodge. If B. F. Allen and other Kasson supporters in Des Moines would support Tichenor, he and Dodge would support a Kasson man for director of the Polk County courthouse. This proposal was agreed to and on April 20, 1867, B. F. Allen, Chester Cole, J. A. Williamson and G. L. Godfrey telegraphed Harlan in Tichenor's favor. Harlan received these telegrams while Tichenor's case was pending in the Senate, and on the strength of their endorsement had Tichenor confirmed.¹

Understandably the Register was quite confused with all these mechanisms. In the edition of April 20, 1867, Palmer inserted the following notice:

CHANGE OF POSTMASTERS.--We know nothing more about the reported change of Postmasters at this place any further than what was announced in the telegraphic dispatches of Wednesday morning.

Even more understandable was John Teesdale's fury once the final result became known. Tichenor reported that "Teesdale & his friends are

¹ Tichenor to Dodge, April 27, 1867; Hirshson, p. 150; While Senator Harlan seems to have given in to Tichenor under constituent pressure, Postmaster General Randall was just plain duped. "Besides rewarding the party faithful, the postmaster general's purpose was to use the patronage in such a way as to secure the renomination of the president he served." Randall, wartime governor of Wisconsin and ardent supporter of President Johnson, registered "perhaps the most notable failure" in respect to this charge. Fuller, pp. 72, 292.

fearfully taken aback at My appointment," and that was probably an understatement.¹ On April 29, 1867, Teesdale wrote Grenville Dodge about as scorching a letter as now exists in the Dodge Papers. After reminding the general of their ten-year acquaintanceship (extending back four years before Dodge met Tichenor, and six years before Tichenor became a member of the Republican party) Teesdale proceeded to vent his wrath:

I have been charged with abandoning my political party and voting against you. This charge has been made at Washington, as I have the authority of Senator Harlan for stating. By whom the charge was made it needs not that I should state. I presume that if you made it, & sought to justify my removal on that ground, you did so believing it. There can be no mistake as to your informant [Tichenor], & truth requires that I should state that he is a liar & slanderer, who cannot even plead ignorance for his assassin like traduction. A soldier ought to know how to appreciate a man who thus stealthily stabs a neighbor. . . .

It is true that with three fourths of the Republicans here I had favored the renomination of Mr. Kasson, even before your name was connected with the canvass as well as after. But it was a choice between friends which is not considered a political crime. My opposition ended with your nomination. I supported you in good faith. I did not suppose it necessary to fawn like a sycophant and tell of my services. I confided in our old time friendship for due consideration & justice at your hands. While thus confiding I am thrust from the office I hold, at your instigation, without the slightest warning, without a hearing, without a petition from a single soul in favor of my successor, without consultation of the community doing business at the office, & against the advice of your own intimate friends.

Now, I ask sir, with all earnestness & plainness is this right? Is this just? Is this what I had a right to expect from an old friend, for supporting whom I was threatened with and expected ostracism? I have recited the plain, unvarnished facts. I submit them to your own better sense of what is due between honorable, fair-dealing men, associated in the same cause.

Had my term been at a close. Had there been complaint against My official action. Had there been an open expression

¹ Tichenor to Dodge. April 21, 1867, Dodge Papers.

from My own party against Me, & for my competition, the case had been different. But none of these events transpired. The blow was struck at the close of the session, when there was no opportunity or time for counter action, & a man is selected for My place whom I kept in My office as clerk (when I first took possession) until I was waited upon by Republicans with a formal remonstrance against keeping him in the office on the ground that they had no confidence in his honesty.

That I feel keenly such a blow you need not be surprised. Is it such treatment as I had a right to expect?

Due to both outright embarrassment at such goings on and fear as to what result the final outcome of the clandestine battle would have on local party accord, Frank Palmer avoided announcing the winner in the Register. Instead he sent off an urgent letter to Dodge telling of Isaac Brandt's disappointment and asking:

If you can think of any encouraging thing for the future that you can write me, to be shown to Brandt, please do it. I do not ask it on my own account, but that we may have harmony among our friends.¹

As for John Teesdale, his defeat killed any political ambition he may have harbored. At first Teesdale worried local Republicans by threatening "his old dodge" of starting another newspaper to fight Dodge's new Des Moines "regency."² But his threats subsided when he decided he wasn't willing to claw and scrape his way back to a place of recognition in a political party which seemed to have been taken over by such unprincipled men. Instead, he quietly quit Des Moines for

¹ Frank W. Palmer to Dodge, April 23, 1867, Dodge Papers. In the same letter Palmer said that Brandt "felt considerably worked up on the subject, particularly as certain Kasson men who had known of his p.m. aspirations had reminded him that they had told him he would be cheated by George."

² Tichenor to Dodge, April 21, 1867, Dodge Papers.

Mt. Pleasant where he "engaged in mercantile pursuits--an occupation somewhat new to him."¹

Although the Tichenor-Teesdale battle for the Des Moines postmastership was only a small side affair stemming from Iowa's 1866 Fifth District congressional campaign it does serve as a perfect reflection of the larger contest, as well as of most other Iowa political battles in the period 1866-1872. Historians now consider the political struggles of that era as lacking in "genuine issues, past, present, or future." Below the surface of the fierce political jargon of the day lay motives that related primarily to personal advancement. "Radicalism was not under attack. Southern Reconstruction was a dead issue, of no interest to Iowans."² Rather, Iowa political contests of the postwar period were generally,

fought in two stages: first as a conflict between rival Republican office seekers, then as a struggle between Republican and Democratic spoilsmen. Personalities, not principles, dominated each phase of the campaign. By far the most important issue at stake was who was going to get what.³

By May 3, 1867, George Tichenor's bond, signed by Frank Palmer and George W. Jones, was on its way to Washington, but Tichenor feared his formal commission would be "greatly delayed."⁴ The commission was delayed, but probably to no greater extent than was usual for that

¹ Daily State Register, Jan. 14, 1869.

² Leland L. Sage, A History of Iowa (Ames: The Iowa State Univ. Press, 1974), p. 184.

³ Hirshson, pp. 134-35.

⁴ Tichenor to Grenville Dodge, May 3, 1867, Dodge Papers.

time. Tichenor took formal control of the Des Moines post office on Thursday, May 16, 1867. In reporting the fact the next day in the Register Palmer was quick to point out that,

The old staff of assistants will be retained without change of rank or increase or decrease in numbers. Mr. John Beckwith, the popular, obliging and capable head clerk will still continue in that position, while Wm. T. Haywood and Julius C. Peters, the gentlemanly and competent attendants at the deliveries, will also fill the same posts as heretofore.¹

Although Tichenor's appointment may have left bruises in local Republican party structure Grenville Dodge's supporters do seem to have achieved the smooth transfer of power they wanted. By August 1867, Tichenor reported to Dodge that "I am getting along very well and all hands seem pleased with my administration of the Post Office."² By October 1867, Tichenor had even received letters from Post Office Department officials in Washington complimenting him on his services.³

And, of course, Tichenor from the start of his tenure as postmaster looked for ways to serve Dodge, his real boss, in Washington--even when it meant disregarding postal laws and regulations. When the question of distributing Dodge's political material came up Tichenor offered to help:

It is not necessary for me to send you names. You can frank the documents & send them to me, and I will address them & see that they are delivered in such way that they will all believe that

¹ Daily State Register, May 17, 1867.

² Tichenor to Dodge, Aug. 28, 1867, Dodge Papers.

³ Tichenor to Dodge, Oct. 19, 1867, Dodge Papers.

you addressed them. While I am postmaster you can be assured that I shall use My office to your best advantage.¹

Tichenor also seems to have been well received by his employees in the Des Moines post office. He may not have been the principled man that his abolitionist predecessor was, but the political patronage game that he played won him many friends. On Christmas morning of 1869 the post office staff surprised him with a laudatory address and a gift of two bronze statuettes representing "Mazeppa" and "Amazon."²

On the social scene the Tichenors proved equally successful. In January 1869, they were invited to the lavish house warming party at B. F. Allen's new "Terrace Hill" mansion. The Register reported that Mrs. Tichenor, "a handsome lady, wore a handsome blue silk, with white lace overskirt, trimmed with white satin and looped with pink roses."³

Just as the "Terrace Hill" reception probably marked the high point of George Tichenor's political success in Des Moines, it also served as a victory party for those stalwart, pioneer town builders in attendance. As they circulated among the huge ice cream block molded in the figure of George Washington, the oysters, the boned turkeys, the 25-pound fruit cakes and the entertainment provided at the grand piano, all conversation turned again and again to the wonder of it all. Here, in a spot where a short 25 years before the Indians

¹ Ibid.

² Daily State Register, Dec. 28, 1869.

³ Ibid., Feb. 3, 1869.

had held sway over an uncivilized land, there now stood a flourishing city of 12,000 (the third largest city in the state), and they now celebrated it all in a house which many pronounced the most elegant in the Midwest. It was a victory of sound judgement in the face of adversity, a classical case of successful town promotion. In the late 1840s it had taken almost a blind faith to pin one's hopes on the embryonic town at the Racoon Forks. And it had also taken confidence and determination to stick to the dream through the financial crisis of 1857-58 and the ensuing civil-war years. But now it had all "come together," not only for B. F. Allen, but for the community as a whole.¹

In his first two years as postmaster George Tichenor witnessed several important city improvements which climaxed the twenty-fifth anniversary of settlement at the Racoon Forks. In the fall of 1867 Messrs. White and Turner began construction of a street railway from the court house east to the state Capitol building. The Register didn't know if an opening excursion was planned for this, the first street railway in the state, but said:

We propose to take a ride on the first train, and will consider the privilege a greater one than that tendered us for a trip across the Plains on the Great Pacific Road. . . . Any one who has been in the capital city can readily vouch for the necessity of the institution. Des Moines and London both occupy about the same amount of territory.²

The five cars for the system arrived January 9, 1868. They weighed

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., Nov. 30, 1867.

slightly less than a ton each, and were each drawn by two horses. They left the Avenue House for the Capitol every 15 minutes--fare 10 cents.¹

The city's first steam fire engine, the "General Crocker," was purchased in the spring of 1868. When Mayor Spofford exhibited the engine on the streets, drawn by four dashing grays, the Register pronounced it

as beautiful as a butterfly, as brassy as an office seeker, and looks big enough to put out any fire we ever heard of, except that one the good book tells about. . . . The Mayor drove it up in front of Joe Sharman's photograph gallery, and Joseph leveled his camera on it, with what result we don't know. (Figure 105)²

In the summer of 1868 Albert Ruger, the famous panoramic artist from Battle Creek, Michigan, visited Des Moines to make a preliminary pencil sketch for his bird's-eye view of the city. The Register called for public patronage of the work (Figure 106), declaring that:

In no other way can persons at a distance obtain so correct an idea of our town, as by a close examination of this picture. So far as we could judge, every building in the city is shown. . . . Put down your names and let's have the picture.³

Ruger's view was well received by the general public for it was an accurate representation of the familiar. It was promoted by businessmen as another useful tool for town promotion. And the business

¹ Ibid., Jan. 8 and 14, 1868.

² Ibid., May 10, 1868; Later, when a rotten and defective hose on the new engine hampered fire fighters' efforts, the newspaper urged the city to lodge a complaint with the manufacturer. Ibid., Nov. 15, 1868.

³ Ibid., July 16, 1868; For more on Ruger's career, see John R. Hebert's Panoramic Maps of Anglo-American Cities (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1974), p. 5.

community really was proud of the turn their city had taken. When the Register heard that Ed Clapp had just paid Israel Spencer \$27,000 for two vacant Walnut Streets lots he had sold to him in 1853 for \$500, it asked,

where's the city, east or west, north or south, ancient or modern, that can show such a wonderful and rapid increase in the value of property? If you have time, just figure out what interest Mr. Spencer has received from his five hundred dollars. The Capital City of Iowa against the world!¹

By far the most important municipal development during the 1867-1869 period was the 1867 arrival of the city's second railroad. The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific road building crew laid four miles of track in less than two days to bring their road into East Des Moines on August 31, 1867. The arrival of this eastern road, a year and four days after the arrival of the south-eastern Des Moines Valley R.R., was recognized as a major transportation breakthrough. In celebration photographer J. P. Sharman was hired to photograph the welcoming crowd in front of the engine and crew. The Register reported that the eyes of the crowd were glued to the powerful No. 91 construction engine, "which had actually passed the unfathomable sloughs of Skunk Bottom without slacking speed, and possessed the power to haul all creation over in the same manner."²

On September 9, 1867, the first C.R.I.&P. passenger train started its regular run to Des Moines. It left Davenport at 7:30 a.m. and

¹ Daily State Register, Jan. 7, 1869.

² Ibid., Sept. 1, 1867.

pulled into East Des Moines at 5 p.m. The first train consisted of two express and mail cars, two passenger cars and a splendid family state room coach loaned by the Pittsberg, Ft. Wayne & Chicago R.R. Until the C.R.I.&P. completed its Des Moines River bridge and west-side station (October 1868) the Western Stage Company's omnibus line conveyed passengers to the west side.¹

The coming of the Chicago road enabled Postmaster Tichenor to achieve the efficiency of rail-transported mail that had always eluded Postmaster Teesdale. By September 10, 1867, the Eastern mail, delivered entirely via the C.R.I.&P., was coming in six hours ahead of the old schedule.² Even better, Tichenor, learning that the C.R.I.&P. planned to run two trains a day into Des Moines (Figure 107), arranged for both trains to carry mail. This 100 percent improvement was heralded in Tichenor's published mail schedule (Figure 108) and in the Register,

thanks to steam and Col. T[ichenor] we are able to hear from the world twice a day. Iowa City, that has had a railroad for eight or ten years, and only had one mail each day, should be thankful to Des Moines, whose influence has brought a much-to-be desired end.³

The new schedule would be adhered to too; in only one instance during the 1868-69 period did the newspaper mention a C.R.I.&P. mail delay.⁴

¹ Ibid., Sept. 6 and Dec. 31, 1867, Jan. 17 and Oct. 21, 1868; Although the Des Moines Valley R.R. reached Des Moines a year ahead of the C.R.I.&P. it did not complete its Des Moines River bridge until April 13, 1869. Ibid., Jan. 1, 1870.

² Ibid., Sept. 10, 1867.

³ Ibid., Sept. 17, 1867.

⁴ The one failure was due to the severe snow storm of Feb. 1-3, 1869. Ibid., Feb. 4, 1869.

Not only was Postmaster Tichenor able to utilize the new railroad connection to cut mail delivery time in half, but he displayed real talent in maintaining a good relationship with his post office patrons. For one thing, he fed to the Register what he felt was the most pertinent information to be found in the monthly issues of Holbrook's U.S. Mail and Post Office Assistant.¹ Tichenor directly quoted this publication in relaying information regarding unpaid printed matter to foreign countries and the knotty question of whether "a postmaster is required to look in lock boxes for every one of a family that comes along."² By the fall of 1868 Tichenor had taken the process one step further by issuing his own quarterly Post Office Bulletin. The Register called it,

a large and handsome card, containing all the necessary rules, information and instructions required in the transaction of any business with or through the Home or Foreign postal establishments. This idea originates we believe, with the Colonel. The publication . . . will be of exceeding value as a ready means of references to everyone.³

Tichenor's close attention to Post Office Department policy statements and changes was a vital necessity for they came with great frequency during his time in office. One such change was in the system of letter registration. A new style of canvas envelope was to be used, one which was "sufficiently novel to attract the attention of

¹ This newspaper (1860-1872) was devoted to rates, schedules, and postal regulations. In 1975 it was reprinted by the Collectors Club of Chicago.

² Daily State Register, Aug. 15 and Nov. 20, 1867.

³ Ibid., Oct. 4, 1868.

distributing clerks."¹ Ten years before the first registration system had been criticized in Des Moines as a silly idea which only served to help postal thieves by pointing out to them just which letters were likely to contain money. But in 1867, with the popularity of the postal money order for money transfer well established, the registered letter was finally being recognized as an efficient means for detecting the theft of important papers.² Then there were the many misconceptions to be explained, such as the rent for post office boxes and drawers. Tichenor explained that this money did not go into the private pocket of the postmaster, that under the 1864 law all such revenue belonged to the government and must be collected in advance.³

The years 1867-1869 brought a change in the appearance of the mail. Post office customers noted the spreading fad of the billboard business advertisement on the reverse side of envelopes (Figure 109), monogrammed personal stationery, and a beautiful new issue of postage stamps, some denominations of which were the first United States stamps to depict scenes instead of portraits. For postal authorities the same period was one of problems with the illegal reuse of postage stamps, sloppily addressed letters, stamps that would not stick, and a new regular issue of stamps which soon proved unpopular.

¹ Ibid., May 24, 1867.

² Iowa State Journal, Feb. 21, 1857; Daily State Register, May 28, 1867; In 1867 money order business at the Des Moines post office totaled \$38,490--more than a 100 percent increase over the year before. Ibid., Jan. 26, 1868.

³ Daily State Register, July 9, 1867.

The problem of stamp cleaning and reuse was especially pertinent in the case of pen-cancelled stamps from small offices. Such stamps could be made to look unused by the simple application of a little ink eradicator.¹ The Register warned its readers not to sell cancelled postage stamps to stamp collectors:

These latter chaps remove the cancellations by some process, and then sell the stamps for good ones. The penalty for either selling, buying, or using a once cancelled stamp is \$1,000 fine and five years' imprisonment.²

The Post Office Department's response to such activity was the issuance of the grilled 1861-66 designs released in August 1867. The grill (embossing) applied to the existing issue broke the paper fibers on the face of the stamps, making it possible for the cancelling ink to soak in so deep it couldn't be removed. Most of the grilled stamps were shipped to smaller post offices, but many examples are known used from Des Moines (Figure 110).

Sloppy addresses were not illegal as was the reuse of postage stamps, but they were certainly a more widespread and troublesome problem. Smudged and illegible pencil directions so annoyed postal clerks that the Post Office Department finally announced it would not forward such letters, but treat them as unstamped mail. This angered the Register which used the occasion to vent its discontent with another postal policy as well:

¹ John N. Luff, "The Postage Stamps of the United States," Weekly Philatelic Gossip, March 14, 1942, p. 11; Lester G. Brookman, Notes on the Grilled Issues of the United States (State College, Pa.: American Philatelic Society, 1940), p. 5.

² Daily State Register, June 8, 1867.

The next edict will probably be to enforce the humbug idea of allowing no letters to be forwarded [except] those having stamps printed on the envelopes. The same authorities have got a sudden attack of the "economies" and have ordered that unclaimed letters shall no longer [be] advertised at the expense of the Government. To modify this order, however, they very generously give their permission for newspapers to publish said list if they will do it gratuitously.¹

Postal regulations would soon ban the delivery of letters addressed to initials as well, but the problem of these years that was the most annoying to the public was that of postage stamps that would not stick to the envelope. The Register advised that both sides of the stamp should be wetted at the time of use "for if only the gummy side is made wet, it will contract while the other will expand, and its adhesion made risky." But the best remedy, according to the Register, was to order and use envelopes with printed return addresses so as to assure the free return of the letter to the sender in the event that the stamp didn't stick.²

The precise reasoning behind the creation of the 1869 Issue is not known. It must have seemed time for a change, and no doubt many hoped a new issue would have improved adhesiveness. The first notice of the new issue appeared in the Register of January 3, 1869:

The new style of postage stamps will shortly come into use. The new two-cent stamp is to have a mounted post-boy at full speed,

¹ Ibid., Dec. 17, 1867; Three days before the newspaper had complained of the lack of writing paper at the post office. Ibid., Dec. 14, 1867.

² Ibid., Nov. 7, 1868; On an earlier occasion readers had been advised to use government stamped envelopes to insure against the stamp being removed or lost. Ibid., April 7, 1867.

indicating that this stamp is mostly used for dispatched letters; the three-cent stamp has a locomotive, surrounded by three lines of lightning, showing that letters so stamped are to travel as fast as possible; the five-cent has a microscopical view of the painting representing the signing of the Declaration of Independence; the twelve-cent stamp, mostly used for foreign postage, has a steamer at sea; and the thirty-cent stamp has a painting of the surrender of Borgoyne, which will no doubt be a very pretty stamp in the eyes of the Britishers.

The described designs were the original ones; except for the 2¢, 3¢ and 12¢ denomination they would be significantly changed. By March 26, 1869, the Register editor had received several letters and papers from the East stamped with the final version of the new issue:

The one cent stamps have the head of Franklin, the color in Roman ochre. . . . The thirty cent stamp is the most handsome of the lot, for it blends in one group all the national emblems--the eagle, the shield, the flag and stars--and also the national colors--the red, white and blue.¹

It is impossible to assign a first date of sale of the 1869 issue in Des Moines. The Iowa Evening Statesman of March 31, 1869, stated "The Des Moines office has not yet received a supply; when it does ther'll be a rush for the new 'pictures'." And the same newspaper for April 10, 1869, said "The new postage stamp is beginning to make its appearance. The three cent stamp is blue with a train of cars for its central figure, emblematical of the dispatch which should characterize the delivery of this class of mail matter." It seems reasonable to suppose that, like many other offices around the country, Des Moines received its first supply of the 1869 issue in late March or early

¹ Ibid., March 27, 1869.

April and because of the need to first exhaust its supply of the older issues, did not commence the sale of the new stamps until late April.¹

Unfortunately the beautiful 1869 issue, so emblematic of the country's postal progress, was not any better endowed adhesively than the 1867 issue. By October 1869 the Register was again complaining of the "non-stickativeness" of the stamps sold over the counter:

To judge from the number of letters that are daily advertised as having been deposited in the post office unstamped one naturally supposes that there are a great many forgetful letter writers in Des Moines; but the main part of this seeming carelessness is chargeable to the worthlessness of the stamps as regard their adhesiveness. The department is making preparations to issue new styles, or rather pick up those [1861 designs] discarded some time ago, and if it would do the public a service, it will keep the postal paste pot filled with something that will stick while the stamps are being dosed with it.²

Despite the inferior gum of the 1869 Issue, the theme of fast railroad mail conveyed by the 3¢ design did accurately reflect the growing volume and reduced delivery time of the nation's mail carried by rail. This was particularly true in Des Moines where the fully-equipped railroad mail car was introduced in 1869. In January 1869 two of these cars, designed to allow postal clerks to sort and distribute the mail while the train was underway, were fitted up at the

¹ See Luff, "The Postage Stamps of the United States," Weekly Philatelic Gossip, March 21, 1942, p. 37; The number of existing covers showing Des Moines use of the 1869 Issue is respectable but small. The author knows of three 1¢ covers, one 2¢, and nine 3¢ (Figures 111-14).

² Daily Iowa State Register, Oct. 28, 1869.

C.R.I.&P.'s Davenport car works. On February 16, 1869, they were put into service between Davenport and Des Moines, and by August 13, 1869, were running from Des Moines over the C.R.I.&P.'s newly completed road to Council Bluffs. This "new and improved" C.R.I.&P. railway post road was divided into two runs--the first from Chicago to Iowa City, and the second from Iowa City through Des Moines to Council Bluffs. With the exception of Sundays the mail trains ran every day of the week, distributing mail to every post office along the 318 miles of track connecting Davenport with Council Bluffs. On one day alone, October 1, 1869, 6 pouches of 50,000 letters plus 100 packages, passed through Des Moines on the way east to Chicago and the east coast.¹ Eight postal clerks were appointed for the new railroad postal service.²

The tremendous growth in the efficiency of railroad mail facilities contributed to a further increase in business conducted at the Des Moines post office. At the close of the third quarter of 1869

¹ Ibid., Jan. 26, Feb. 17, July 29, Aug. 12, and Oct. 2, 1869; The C.R.I.&P. reached Council Bluffs May 11, 1869, two days after the more significant transcontinental accomplishment at Promontory Summit, Utah Territory. The Des Moines Valley R.R. wasn't idle during the year either. By the end of November their track had been pushed to within 12 miles of Ft. Dodge, Iowa, and daily mail service extended to Grand Junction. This in effect brought railroad mail service to the entire Des Moines River valley. Ibid., Aug. 28 and Nov. 28, 1869.

² The eight clerks were William Ade (Davenport), C. B. McLaughlin (Iowa City), J. E. Fagan (Des Moines), Elisha Cowles (Jasper City), E. W. Clark (Tipton), Walter Temple (Lewis), George Christ (Des Moines), and William Goodreil (Iowa City). Ibid., Aug. 12, 1869; Postmaster Tichenor had used his influence to get George Christ his appointment. Christ later served as Des Moines city marshal and in 1880 was elected chairman of the Republican congressional committee. Tichenor to Grenville Dodge, June 9, 1868, Dodge Papers; The History of Polk County, pp. 783-84.

Postmaster Tichenor could point with pride to 132,129 incoming letters received at his office, compared with 114,556 received during the first quarter of 1868.¹ When the Register learned that postage stamp receipts for the first quarter of 1868 had been \$18,152 it boasted:

Pretty good showing for an inland town, isn't it? And can Dubuque, Davenport, and Burlington trump it by lumping their three piles together? Guess not! . . . This is a good evidence that the post office business pays, and that Des Moines is one of the best places for the business in Iowa--and on top of all, we also have one of the best P.M.'s in the State!²

As popular and efficient as Postmaster Tichenor proved to be, not all post office innovation/improvement during his tenure originated with the postmaster. The Post Office Department and Tichenor's own employees played a vital part. The postal events of 1870 provide ample illustration of this point. The first notable event in the Des Moines post office in 1870 was the appearance of the National Bank Note Company's new 1870 issue. In his report of November 15, 1870, Postmaster General John A. J. Creswell said that the new design was produced because the 1869 issue adopted by his predecessor, Alexander W. Randall, disappointed the public on account of its small size, unshapely form, the inappropriateness of its design, the difficulty of effective cancellation, and the inferior quality of

¹ Daily State Register, April 18, Oct. 2, 1869.

² Ibid., April 18, 1868; During George Tichenor's four year term as postmaster three new Des Moines postmarks, Types 12-14 (Appendix B) were introduced by Des Moines postal clerks. These three markings, plus Types 15-16 introduced under the tenure of Tichenor's successor, rank among the most difficult of all Des Moines markings to type. This is so because Types 12-16 are all 25mm in diameter and similar looking except for slight differences in letter size and spacing.

gum used.¹ As usual, the 3¢ stamp was the first denomination to make its appearance in Des Moines (Figure 115). The Register described it as,

about the size of the stamp that was in use at the beginning of the war, contains a better picture of Washington than that one did, and is printed in a beautiful green. It is much prettier in every way than the little blue one [3¢ 1869] just discarded, but will carry a letter no farther nor faster.²

Neither did the new stamps provide any more inspiration to the public to pay closer attention to properly addressing and stamping its letters. Post office clerks continued to encounter a significant quantity of letters deposited with insufficient postage, no postage at all, insufficient address, or incorrect address. Some indication of the size of the problem on the national level is seen in the fact that during the month of June 1871, more than 838,000 letters, misdirected or otherwise not deliverable, were received at the Dead Letter Office in Washington. Of these 11,700 contained money, checks, receipts, drafts, or other documents of value.³

In an attempt to solve a portion of the problem on the local level Des Moines Assistant Postmaster John Beckwith and Iowa Adjutant General N. B. Baker in December 1869, started a charitable "Postal Association."⁴ Their purpose was to supply the needed stamps on letters

¹ That portion of Creswell's report dealing with the 1870 issue is quoted in John N. Luff, "The Postage Stamps of the United States," Weekly Philatelic Gossip, April 4, 1942, p. 84.

² Daily Iowa State Register, April 23, 1870.

³ Ibid., July 26, 1871.

⁴ Ibid., April 8, 1874.

held for postage. On each letter forwarded by the association the following printed notice was afixed:

This letter was placed in the Postoffice at Des Moines without payment of postage--a postage stamp is attached by the Postal Association. Valuable and important letters are frequently detained by the negligence of writers, and as it is impossible to find out their names, this method is adopted to forward your letter. If you can return the stamp it would enable us to return another letter. Any donation to us in aid of our cause would be gratefully received. Des Moines, Iowa.¹

In the period December 1869, through May 1870, 202 letters were forwarded by the Postal Association and, because the association was apparently selective in its effort, about as many more were left unforwarded. The public was warned that "those who intentionally or negligently drop letters into the Postoffice without the proper stamps need take no encouragement from the efforts of the Postal Association. Most attempts to cheat are easily detected."²

During the entire period that the association functioned (December 1869-April 1874) it forwarded nearly 2,000 underpaid letters, and when it ceased its activities it proclaimed its confidence in having "educated many of our best business men of the necessity of care in mailing letters."³ Although there is no known example of a cover bearing the "remission label" of the Des Moines Postal Association, there is one known from a similar organization in Dubuque (Figure 116).⁴

¹ Ibid., May 20, 1870.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., April 8, 1874.

⁴ The illustration of the Dubuque cover is taken from Richard B.

Although the arrival of the 1870 issue was noticed, the dominant event in Des Moines postal service in 1870 was the completion of the new federal building. Congress appropriated money for the building in 1866 and 5th District Representative John A. Kasson immediately returned to Des Moines to quietly purchase an entire block, on east side of the court house square, for the project.¹

In the spring of 1867 the new 5th District Representative, Grenville M. Dodge, released to the Register the detailed plans of the building. It was to consist of two main stories, a basement and French roof, which would in effect give it an additional story. The building would be constructed of Nauvoo stone with fronts on the south and west. The west front was to include a tower and cupola. Slated to occupy the building were the post office, pension agent, Internal Revenue offices, U.S. Marshal's office, and federal court rooms.² The plans for the structure, drawn by A. B. Mullett, ran to one hundred pages and reportedly cost \$5,000. After reviewing the many pages "where lines, columns, angles, carvings, etc. meet in bewildering profusion" the Register said that the building would be "constructed on a scale of massiveness and elaborateness heretofore unknown in Iowa."³

Graham's article "Forwarded Mail and 'Remission' Labels," The American Philatelist, 86, No. 1 (1972), 33-35.

¹ Younger, p. 214.

² Daily Iowa State Register, April 19, 1867.

³ Ibid., Oct. 18, 1867; The architect, Alfred Bult Mullett (1834-1893), was born in England and worked under Isaiah Rogers in Cincinnati.

George Whittaker was appointed to superintend the construction and the foundation excavation was completed in July 1867. The corner stone was laid with Masonic ceremonies on June 3, 1868, and soon after the government ordered that photographs of the work be taken and forwarded to Washington every three months. On July 1, 1868, Jo Sharman took the first views for this purpose (Figure 117). The Register took notice with the comment "The eye of the Government is a sleepless orb."¹

A strike at the stone quarries delayed construction of the 116 x 64' building throughout the remainder of 1868, but by August 1869 workmen were busy with the third story and mansard roof. And, notwithstanding the accidental destruction of the large stone-lifting derrick at the construction site, the building was roofed, windowed, and doored by December 1869.² Throughout 1870 the Register was filled with progress reports on the interior work. By March the oiled walnut stairways were in place, and in April the hot-water heating system and 2,000 post office letter boxes were installed. Finally, on

before being appointed supervising architect of treasury (1866). Among the buildings designed by him during his ten years with the Treasury Department were the U.S. mint in San Francisco, the south wing of the U.S. treasury building, custom houses at Cairo (Ill.), Portland (Oreg.), and Madison (Wis.), the U.S. marine hospital in Chicago, and post offices in New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Chicago, Columbia (S.C.), Hartford, and Knoxville. The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, XXVII (New York: James T. White & Co., 1939), 452.

¹ Daily Iowa State Register, April 20 and July 25, 1867; June 3 and July 2, 1868.

² Ibid., Dec. 8, 1868; Aug. 14, Aug. 20, and Nov. 27, 1869.

November 26, 1870, the Register announced that the edifice (Figure 118) would be open for public inspection in the afternoon, "Go and see what the Government architect says is the finest piece of work ever done for Uncle Sam, of the kind."¹

The eye-opening inspection was reported in great detail in the Register. After giving the size of the doors and windows (each fitted with French plate glass) the post office quarters were described in glowing terms. Not only were the letter boxes set in walnut and cherry wood cases, but under the boxes,

are 350 letter lock drawers, with the same fine workmanship in their manufacture manifest. All the boxes and drawers are numbered with little silver plates. In this checkered front, through which Des Moines post office clerks are destined to look for ages, are six delivery places, and in the iron posts (painted green) which support the story above, that jet out of box-work, are four holes for the reception of letters, from the corridor in front of the delivery boxes. In front of the letter boxes, up about waist high from the floor, all around the room, is a silver banister, over which people can lean and on which people can rest while waiting for the clerk to pass to them their letters. While looking through the place yesterday we could not help thinking what a magnificent opportunity a lean over that banister would give for the display of a grecian bend. We almost sighed to be a good looking post office clerk, that we might have the pleasure of looking through even a small hole in the wall at the fair ones as they rest their muffs on that silver railing and winningly scold when they are told no letters are there for them.²

The partition in which the letter boxes were placed extended to the ceiling, the space at the top being filled with pieces of ornamental glass. Col. George Tichenor's sanctum was near the south, Court

¹ Ibid., March 30, April 17, and Nov. 26, 1870.

² Ibid., Nov. 27, 1870.

Avenue, entrance. The main room of the post office was lighted with ten chandeliers, each containing four gas burners. The floor of the main room was constructed of marble tiling, and the rest of oiled ash and walnut. Although the building was equipped with hot-water heating system each room was furnished with grates and fire places to be used for heating in the changeable weather of spring and fall. The ceiling in the post office was divided into panels and every room had cornices in its corners.¹

Hundreds looked through the first floor of the brilliantly lighted building during the afternoon open house. Common expressions among the ladies as they promenaded through the corridor in front of the letter boxes were "O! isn't this splendid!" and, "A perfect palace!"²

On Wednesday, November 30, 1870, Postmaster Tichenor moved his quarters into the new building, and the next day the new post office was opened for business (with nearly all boxes labelled and drawers rented). The Post Office Department, in informing Tichenor that he would be allowed another clerk for his expanded operation, suggested that he employ a lady. Miss Florence Winkley, a Simpson Centenary College music teacher, was hired. The Register approved. "A lady clerk for dealing with ladies is placing things just as they should be."³

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., Nov. 30 and Dec. 2, 1870.

In a seeming match to the elegance of the new post office, Postmaster Tichenor in January 1871 released figures which showed his office receipts for 1870 were \$30,904.05, about \$6,000 more than the Davenport post office. Tichenor was also doing quite well on a personal level. In 1868 his father-in-law's lumber business, in which he still retained a partnership, had grown to be the largest lumber company in town. Tichenor's earlier plea to Grenville Dodge to get the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific R.R. to grant GETCHELL & TICHENOR lower rates than their competitors must have succeeded for in 1869 their shipment of 13½ million feet of lumber on the C.R.I.&P. ranked them as that road's largest shipper between Chicago and the Pacific.¹

The 1870 federal census listed the 29-year-old Tichenor as owning real estate valued at \$8,000 and personal property worth \$16,000. This plus his annual post office salary of \$4,000 indicate just how successful a niche Tichenor had created for himself.² It didn't come easy though; he had to wage a continual political fight to hold onto it. After Register editor Frank Palmer's election to Congress (November 1868) to fill Grenville Dodge's House seat, Tichenor reported to Dodge that Palmer had,

¹ Ibid., Jan. 3, 1869, Jan. 22, 1870 and Jan. 5, 1871; Tichenor to Dodge, June 27, 1866, Dodge Papers.

² Tichenor was making the top postmaster salary in the state, equaled only by Edward Russell at Davenport and V. J. Williams at Dubuque. Close behind were J. C. Parrott at Keokuk (\$3,700), C. Dunham at Burling (\$3,400), and T. P. Treynor at Council Bluffs (\$3,400), Register of Officers and Agents (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1870), pp. 405-10.

no less than 20 applicants for My little Post office, Each one of whom are confident of success, so that I really feel very infirm on My official legs . . . I have never talked to Frank about My office . . . if he wants some new friend to have My place, I shall resign it before Grant is inaugurated--I have taken a solemn vow that I never will if I know it ask a favor of an unwilling giver . . . Kasson continues his business of Mischief making . . . has a particular spite at Me and has created no less than a dozen candidates for Postmaster.¹

Through Dodge's personal intercession the claim of the most serious contender, Isaac Brandt, was brushed aside and John Kasson kept from reappointment as First Assistant Postmaster General (in which position he would have been able to reap havoc on Dodge's post office appointees). But complications arose in January 1870, when George G. Wright, defeating the Dodge faction candidate William B. Allison, won the right to run for the seat of ailing Iowa Senator James Grimes. Wright, angered at Tichenor's opposition to him in the contest, immediately began a campaign for his removal from the Des Moines post office. Wright got his law partner, Tom Withrow, to secure letters and petitions to Frank Palmer requesting it, and bluntly told Palmer of his intention. He also enlisted the help of Iowa Senators James Harlan and James B. Howell (who was filling out the remainder of Grimes' term) in his cause.²

In the face of this stiff opposition Tichenor decided to try to preserve party harmony, and his own prosperity, by seeking appointment

¹ Tichenor to Dodge, Jan. 17, 1869, Dodge Papers.

² Younger, p. 231; Dodge to President Grant, March 8, 1869, Dodge Papers; Tichenor to Dodge, Jan. 17 and June 24, 1870, Feb. 15, 1871; Ibid.

as Supervisor of Internal Revenue. But in early February 1871, Tichenor's plans collapsed when President Grant, acting on the influence of Secretary of War William Belknap, gave the supervisorship to John Hedrick of Ottumwa.¹ Tichenor was now forced to fall back on Dodge's help to secure his reappointment as postmaster. In doing so he told Dodge that if Senators Harlan and Howell refused to confirm him,

it does seem to Me that the Senate would confirm Me over their heads, for courtesy requires that the President's nomination backed by the Member [Frank Palmer] shall be confirmed--and Senators have no right to look ahead to a time when some new Member of Senate [George G. Wright] Might come into office who Might be unfavorable to Me. It is preposterous and ridiculous and I feel sure the Senate would so decide--Harlan & Howell have no right to legislate for their Successor, if so they are there simply as the agents of their successors and not representatives of the people of Iowa. Palmer should put the matter to them in that light & demand of them his rights--and I ask you to have the nomination sent in, and if Harlan & Howell will not yield let it go to the Senate & make a fight.²

Dodge's lingering Congressional influence proved adequate for the fight. News of Tichenor's reappointment reached Des Moines February 18, 1871, and the next day Tichenor reported that it caused considerable excitement, "all say 'Dodge did it'" (Figure 119.³ Congratulatory letters and telegrams came in from all over the state causing Tichenor to claim "I have more friends here than I ever had before. Success

¹ Tichenor to Dodge and James Harlan, Feb. 14, 1871, Dodge Papers.

² Tichenor to Dodge, Feb. 15, 1871, Dodge Papers.

³ Tichenor to Dodge, Feb. 19, 1871, Dodge Papers.

makes popularity."¹ The Register admitted that:

The news will be a matter of surprise to some, and one of sincere congratulation to many of our citizens. But few had an idea that a change was intended by the administration, and the continuance of Col. Tichenor shows that his labors as an efficient postal manager are fully appreciated by the powers that be at Washington, and that having a good man in the Iowa central postoffice it proposes to hold onto him for at least four years longer.²

Little did the Register or anyone else dream that George Tichenor's second term would last only seven months! It seems that on February 15, 1871, Tichenor had a secret meeting in Des Moines with Senator-elect George Wright. Wright (Figure 120) reiterated his opposition to Tichenor's continuance as postmaster, but Tichenor got him to agree to cease his opposition to his reappointment on the condition that Tichenor would later resign his position without a fight.³ When Dodge learned of the secret pact he voiced his disapproval, saying that it in effect cancelled the just-won Senate victory. Tichenor apologized, if he had made a mistake, but said that if his judgement was bad his motives were good:

I felt that you would in precipitating a fight with Wright, Make him severely hostile to each & all of you--and at the same time nothing would be accomplished thereby more than My temporary appointment, and the Moral effect of such temporary victory would be destroyed at a very early day by my removal. As it is I felt I would save you & My other good friends an ugly fight with Wright, and by keeping the arrangement a profound secret (as it shall be here) we would have the prestige of victory, Wright's good will, and a chance for my retention, or if I did go out I

¹ Tichenor to Dodge, Feb. 21, 1871, Dodge Papers.

² Daily Iowa State Register, Feb. 19, 1871.

³ Tichenor to Dodge, Feb. 15, 21, and 27, 1871, Dodge Papers.

could do so under a show of Magnanimity, and voluntarily. . . . My reappointment is most heartily and almost universally endorsed here at home & for this very reason I am More indifferent than I would otherwise be to removal by Wright, as it would hurt him more than Me.¹

But two months into Wright's term of office President Grant gave Senator Harlan an increased amount of the state's patronage and, with Wright's intention still firm, Tichenor realized that all chance for his retention was gone.² Although Tichenor told both Dodge and Palmer to make no further sacrifices or concessions on his behalf, eleventh-hour panic later took hold.³ In May 1871, Tichenor beseeched Dodge that, "Unless something is done with Gen. Grant himself, at once, Wright will take My head off."⁴ Dodge didn't respond. Tichenor made his fateful February decision on his own, and Dodge was not about to interfere with it. Once Tichenor realized this he took the magnanimous stance earlier proposed.

On August 2, 1871, the Register announced Tichenor's resignation. The secret agreement with Wright was kept secret. When Tichenor left office on September 1, 1871, the Register simply said,

business of a private character pressed upon his time and attention so hard, as to lead him to tender his resignation. It is but justice to the Colonel to say that he retires from the office with an official record and personal reputation not only sustained as good but proved to be superior.⁵

¹ Tichenor to Dodge, Feb. 27, 1871, Dodge Papers.

² Hirshson, p. 179.

³ Tichenor to Dodge, Feb. 27, 1871, Dodge Papers.

⁴ Tichenor to Dodge, May 13, 1871, Dodge Papers.

⁵ Daily Iowa State Register, Sept. 2, 1871.

Tichenor still retained the chairmanship of the Republican State Central Committee (won in June 1871), but other than using that position to fight for Dodge's interests Tichenor's future plans were at first uncertain. Expecting nothing and asking nothing at the hands of "Palmer, Wright & Co.," Tichenor finally used the influence of Dodge and Adjutant General Baker to secure the position of United States Pension Agent in Des Moines.¹

In 1872 Des Moines became a separate congressional district, enabling John Kasson to win back his old seat in Congress. Iowa politics now held nothing for George Tichenor, and in 1873 he moved to Chicago where he became a merchant. After his 1877 divorce and an 1878 bank failure Iowa Senator Allison got Tichenor a position classifying dyes in the Philadelphia custom house. But Tichenor did end his career in a position of more importance; as Assistant Secretary of Treasury under President Benjamin Harrison he helped to write William McKinley's tariff bill of 1890.²

¹ Tichenor to Dodge, June 19, Sept. 28, and Nov. 16, 1871, Dodge Papers.

² Hirshson, pp. 187, 197, 226.

CHAPTER NINE

"Ret" Clarkson and the "High-Water Mark" of Des Moines Postal Service

At the time the Register announced the resignation of George Tichenor as postmaster it commented that it remained to be seen what sort of officer his successor would make.¹ Considering that the new postmaster, James S. Clarkson, was the managing editor of the Register, that was a very temperate statement. Clarkson was the second newspaper man to serve as Des Moines postmaster, and it can undoubtedly be said that he led the most noteworthy career (in and out of the postal service) of any Des Moines postmaster.

Born in Brookville, Indiana, in 1842, Clarkson was "literally raised" in his father Coker F. Clarkson's Brookville American newspaper printing office. In 1855 Clarkson removed with his father to Grundy County, Iowa. Between 1856 and 1862 he participated in the operation of a 28-mile section of the "underground railroad" that helped many slaves from Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas to make their way to Canada. Rejected from enlistment in the Union army because of weak lungs, Clarkson managed the family farm while his brother was away to war and his father served in the Iowa state senate. But Clarkson's natural inclinations were adverse to agricultural life, and in 1866 he came to Des Moines to work for the Register as a printer. His previous

¹ Daily Iowa State Register, Sept. 2, 1871.

exposure to the trade proved invaluable and he was soon promoted to the positions of foreman, reporter, night editor, and city editor.¹

Clarkson came to be known by his nickname, "Ret," a pen name originating in his custom of marking his copy with "Ret. Clarkson" (Return to Clarkson) so that all his editorials and articles, dashed off in a wretched handwriting, would be returned to him for final proofreading before being allowed to go to press. Clarkson (Figure 121) was described as having a nervous, sluggish temperament, genial and social, but not talkative. He was decidedly positive in character and possessed an indomitable will. He was also a warm, tenacious friend, and a hard hater.² This the Democratic Party learned only too well in 1889-1890 when Clarkson, as First Assistant Postmaster General under President Benjamin Harrison, ignored the new civil service system and either fired or forced from office more than 50,000 Democratic postmasters.³

¹ History of Polk County, pp. 786-89; The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, II (New York: James T. White & Co., 1899), 118; New York Times (obituary), June 1, 1918.

² Leland L. Sage, William Boyd Allison: A Study in Practical Politics (Iowa City: State Historical Society, 1956), p. 106; History of Polk County, p. 788.

³ About 1,350 of the deposed Democrats were Presidential postmasters and 49,000 non-Presidential postmasters. Clarkson, whose activities had by this time won him the additional nickname of "The Headsman," described civil service as "the toy of a child, the trifling thing of hobby riders." Cullinan, p. 105; Louis R. Harlan, ed., The Booker T. Washington Papers (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1975), IV, 114n. For a self-defense of his political patronage see J. S. Clarkson, "The Politician and the Pharisee," The North American Review, 152 (May 1891),

But aside from the rather sordid political dealings of his later career, Clarkson was an exemplary postmaster in Des Moines. Aided mostly by circumstances largely beyond his control, he was able to bring about more improvement in Des Moines postal service than any other postmaster before or since.

How did Clarkson in five short years work himself up from the lowly position of an apprentice Register printer to that of a serious candidate for the politically important position of postmaster of Des Moines? It was through his own journalistic talent and drive! When Register editor Frank Palmer was nominated for Congress in 1868 Clarkson was named managing editor. And when on December 4, 1870, Clarkson, his father and brother purchased the Register from Mills & Company, Clarkson's political base was complete. Under the Clarkson Company the already radical Register

soon became the Bible of Radical Republicanism in Iowa and much of the Middle West. Ret dominated the editorial policy of the¹ paper and therefore was the man who must be won by Dodge & Co.

A means for winning Clarkson soon became apparent when Senator-elect George Wright announced his determination to oust Postmaster Tichenor. Wright first asked Clarkson to allow his name to be put forward for the political plum. But Clarkson, angry at Wright's ill treatment of a friend, flatly refused. Later, when Representative

613-23; Dorman B. Eaton, a former President of the Civil Service Commission, wrote a strong rebuttal to Clarkson's argument in "A New Variety of Mugwump," The North American Review, 153 (July 1891), 44-53.

¹ Sage, William Boyd Allison, p. 106.

Frank Palmer, speaking for both Wright and Grenville Dodge, asked, Clarkson agreed.¹

Clarkson's assumption of the postmastership was not accompanied by any other personnel changes in the Des Moines office, and with the exception of a few minor problems, Clarkson enjoyed a smooth start to his long term of office. The first minor difficulty to come along was the great Chicago fire of October 8-9, 1871; it delayed the delivery of important Chicago business correspondence for about a week. The fire also knocked out the Register's telegraphic connection with Chicago and points east for nearly two weeks. On December 5, 1871, visible evidence of the fire passed through Des Moines in the form of a badly scorched Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific mail car.²

Another set of minor problems closer to home concerned the new Des Moines postoffice building. The heavy walnut storm doors had to be replaced as did two complete sets of malfunctioning drawer locks.³ Worse yet, the Joliet stone used in covering most of the exterior of the building (Figure 122) proved defective. It started scaling off so fast that the walls were seriously defaced:

In some of the stones there are open seams that reach their entire length, from which the particles of rock are wearing away. The tool marks are nearly effaced and the outside of any of the

¹ F. W. Palmer to Dodge, Jan. 4, 1871; Tichenor to Dodge, Jan. 9, 1871; W. B. Allison to Dodge, Jan. 14, 1871; Tichenor to Dodge, Jan. 17, 1870 [i.e. 1871], Dodge Papers.

² Daily Iowa State Register, Oct. 12, Oct. 18 and Dec. 6, 1871.

³ *Ibid.*, Jan. 12 and Nov. 1, 1872.

stones can be rubbed off in a shower by the naked hand. Our builders say that Joliet stone isn't the thing for buildings. It is hard and will resist an immense pressure, but will not resist the action of the weather. The new State House in Illinois is constructed of it and washed so badly that Architect Piquenard was sent to Paris to procure a recipe for coating the walls to preserve them.¹

And when the Des Moines postoffice was made a depository for all incoming Iowa mail (February 1873) the building's size became a problem; the sacks began piling up so fast that a new addition to the 15-month-old structure was deemed desirable! One plan for alleviating the pressure called for the construction of an elevator that would allow the basement to be used for the receipt and delivery of mail.²

Finally, there was the annoyance of the Jesse James gang's robbery of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific train 64 miles west of Des Moines (between Anita and Adair, Iowa). At dusk on July 21, 1873, the band of five to seven men loosened a rail at a blind curve and attached a heavy cord to the end of the iron rail. Late that night when the train approached, the rail was drawn out of line toppling the engine and crushing the engineer. The men took \$1,700 from the express car and several sacks of mail, but overlooked two boxes of registered letters. The robbery was a great disappointment for the gang; they had missed by a few hours a train that was transporting a heavy shipment of gold from the West. Disgusted and furious the hooded riders collected money

¹ Ibid., July 20, 1873; Toward the end of Clarkson's term of office the cornice stone of the building came loose and had to be bolted to the wall. Ibid., Jan. 4, 1879.

² Ibid., Feb. 6, March 2, and March 30, 1873.

and valuables from passengers before riding off to the south. Within a week the mail and express trains on the road were supplied with breechloading Springfield rifles furnished by the state. Four weapons went with the night express and three with the day mail.¹

Taken as a whole the mail problems facing Clarkson during his first two years in office did not seriously curtail service, and they pale in comparison with the number and significance of the improvements made during the same period. In fact, the improvements, made almost entirely during the year 1873, were so numerous that 1873 must be considered the "high-water mark" of Des Moines postal service. The first beneficial move of that banner year was Clarkson's decision to leave the outer doors of the postoffice unlocked on Sundays between 10 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. This allowed those holding locked boxes to pick up their mail after the general delivery window closed at 10. The Register joked,

you fellows who have been telling your wives and your pastors that you can't get up in time Sunday morning to get ready for church and go to the Post Office, too, can't make that clause work any longer--as your mail, if it be in a lock-box (and everybody can have a lock-box) can be got after church as well as before.²

¹ William A. Settle, Jr., Jesse James Was His Name (Columbia, Mo.: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1966), pp. 47-48; Daily Iowa State Register, July 22, 23, and 29, 1873; Four months later a farmer in southwestern Adair County found one of the mail sacks discarded by the gang. It must have been jettisoned in a hurry for it still contained a few papers and eighty heavy gold rings! Daily Iowa State Register, Nov. 22, 1873.

² Daily Iowa State Register, Dec. 27, 1872.

The second improvement of 1873 to hit the newspapers was the Post Office Department's authorization for the establishment of the city's first branch postoffice--on the east side. In a letter of January 7, 1873, J. W. Marshall, First Assistant Post Master General, told Clarkson:

When you have rented the office, and put in the proper fixtures, you will send the mail to it as frequently as you may deem necessary to meet the reasonable demands of the people of that section of your city. This will be merely an extension of your office, under your supervision and control, and subject to the same regulations.¹

Clarkson secured a building on the northwest corner of East Sixth and Walnut Streets for the branch office, and appointed A. L. F. Mower the deputy in charge.

News of the arrangement was received on the east side with handshakings and the utmost satisfaction. Ever since January 11, 1867, when the East Des Moines postoffice was closed (for the second and last time) east-siders had felt slighted, and had campaigned for at least a branch station of the Des Moines office. Fifth District Representatives John Kasson and Grenville Dodge had tried unsuccessfully to win Post Office Department approval for such a branch. Their successor, Frank Palmer, tried even harder only to find that the Department considered that so much money had been spent on the new Des Moines postoffice building (in relation to the comparatively small population) that the additional expense of a branch office was out of the question. For east-siders this was insult added to injury for they were disturbed

¹ Ibid., Jan. 12, 1873.

that the new west-side postoffice had been built so far west of the river, making it even less accessible to them than the old offices on Third Street. Luckily Palmer's zealous persistence (as well as his seat on the powerful appropriations committee) finally paid off. But permission for the branch office was given only on the condition that it be maintained for the first year largely at Postmaster Clarkson's own expense. In other words it was to subsist on just a slight increase over the amount already appropriated for Clarkson's maintenance of the main office. It took some risk for Clarkson to undertake the experiment, but he did it,

feeling confident that the desirability and the necessity of it would soon be proved, and the establishment of it justified in the end as having been not only a matter of expediency but also a source of increased revenue . . . a part of the East Side's gain will be the West Side's loss--although the degree will be small--in so far as it will somewhat lessen the daily tide of people sweeping along to the Postoffice in our West Side streets. But right is right, and the West Side will join with the East in congratulations on the improvement. We now have reached the point in practical proof that the location of the Postoffice was wrongly chosen. Had it been placed on the river bank . . . each Side would have been equally accommodated, and a Branch office would not have been one of the necessities of the city, or at least not until the population had become three fold what it is now.¹

In the week preceding the February 4, 1873, opening of the east-side branch Clarkson asked patrons expecting to pick up their mail there to leave written orders for such service at the main office. The fact that no eastside branch markings are known prior to 1884 is explained by Postmaster Clarkson in a letter to the Register:

¹ Ibid.

The Department requires that all letters mailed from this city shall be post-marked "Des Moines." The East Side people, however, can assist materially in the quicker and more certain delivery of their mail by asking their correspondents to address them at "Des Moines Branch Office," or at "East Des Moines," as they shall prefer.¹

Soon after the branch office opened city aldermen Ray and George presented an ordinance to the city council allowing the mails to and from the east side to be transported over the city bridges free of toll. Considering that east sidlers previously had to pay toll charges just to pick up their mail (if they crossed the city bridges in any way other than on foot), it is not surprising that they agitated for their own office! And the branch office soon proved it could not only pay for itself, but it materially improved business on the east side.²

At the same meeting at which the toll-free transportation of east-side mail was discussed, the city council gave their go-ahead for the third of Postmaster Clarkson's 1873 improvements. They granted Clarkson permission to attach the city's first letter-collection boxes to gas-lamp poles. The first six boxes were put up so late in the day on February 13, 1873, that only one letter (a valentine) was collected from them the next morning. Within a week, however, three full mail sacks a day were being collected.³

¹ Ibid., Feb. 1, 1873; Six weeks later local railroad mail clerks promised Clarkson that all matter directed to the east side would be separated and "packaged" on the cars. This done, the mail could be sent directly to the east-side branch instead of being slowed down by any sorting process at the main office. Ibid., April 13, 1873.

² Ibid., Feb. 9 and 12, 1873.

³ Ibid., Feb. 9, 14 and 21, 1873.

The first six letter boxes were positioned at the corners of west First and Walnut, Second and Court, Third and Walnut, Fourth and Walnut, Fifth and Walnut, and Eighth and Walnut. An additional box was ordered for Third and Court plus two for the east side. Mail was collected from the boxes at 7:30 A.M., 12:30 P.M., and 3 P.M. every day except Sunday.¹ During the week ending March 29, 1873, mail collected at the original six boxes panned out as follows:

First Street & Walnut, 317
 Second Street & Court Ave., 69
 Third Street & Walnut, 230
 Fourth Street & Walnut, 253
 Sixth Street & Walnut, 168
 Eighth Street & Walnut, 60²

When the three additional letter boxes arrived in April they were found to be of an older, square-top design rather than the rounded-top design of the first six boxes (Figure 125). In an apparent effort to segregate the older boxes, all were put up on the east side--at the corner near Ray's hardware, at the corner near Webb's grocery store, and in front of the Jones House. When thirty more round-top boxes arrived on July 30, 1873, the square-top east-side boxes were replaced and the old ones shipped to Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. Additional boxes were put up on the east side at First and Locust, at the capitol, on

¹ Ibid., Feb. 9, 14, 1873.

² Ibid., April 2, 1873; A large quantity of the mail deposited in these early letter boxes was quite colorful. By 1873 the trend toward lavishly illustrated American business covers was nearing its peak period, with many Des Moines firms contributing fine examples (Figures 123-124).

Eleventh and Williamson, at the east end of the Court Avenue bridge, and at the Eagle Iron Works on Court Avenue. On the west side new boxes were placed at Fifth and Walnut, Third and Court, Third and Vine, Twelfth and Locust, on Centre between Tenth and Eleventh, Fourth and Chestnut, Seventh and Centre, Ninth and Pleasant, Ninth and School, Eighth and Cherry, Second and Elm, Sixth and Crocker, and on upper Third, upper Walnut, upper High Street, and upper Mulberry.¹

The appearance of the new letter boxes contributed to the storehouse of local humor. Soon after the first six were installed the Register learned that the editor of the Winterset Madisonian was telling his readers that the boxes were eliciting all kinds of speculation as to their use, "most of the people pronouncing them to be patent bee hives placed there to abstract honey from the gas as it goes up to be burned."² Later, the Register reported a fellow dropped three unstamped letters in a box at the corner of Fourth and Walnut and then walked into Smith & Sagers to enquire where he should go to pay the postage on them.³

The fourth Des Moines postal improvement of 1873 was one enjoyed by every city, town, and hamlet across the country--the inauguration of a cheaper postage rate as incorporated in the first government-issue postal card.

¹ Ibid., April 29, 31, Aug. 1, 2, and Sept. 4, 1873.

² Ibid., Feb. 21, 1873.

³ Ibid., July 13, 1873.

Austria issued the world's first postal card in 1869, and in 1870 Postmaster General John A. J. Creswell recommended that the United States follow suit. In December 1870 and again in December 1871, Representative John Hill of New Jersey introduced a bill authorizing the issue of cheap postal cards.¹ Both bills were rejected on the ground that it was "a new reform, and time should be given for careful consideration of the matter."² More specifically, objections were raised regarding the proposed 1¢ rate as well as a fear of the possible misuse of the open back of the card for obscene or other embarrassing messages.³

Undaunted, Representative Hill on April 9, 1872 introduced a revised postal card bill (H.R. 2256) which he felt would remedy the objections made to the previous bills. The first part of the bill called for a 1¢ "open correspondence or post card" not exceeding 3½ by 6½ inches. The second section of the bill provided for a \$100 fine for any obscene, vulgar, or scurrilous use of the card. The general concept of the new bill met with support in the House. But Representatives James Garfield of Ohio, Benjamin Butler of Massachusetts, and Clarkson Potter of New York, citing weaker libel laws in the United

¹ Charles A. Fricke, ed., A Contemporary Account of the First United States Postal Card 1870-1875, Centennial Handbook of the First Issue Postal Card, II (Philadelphia: The author, 1973), p. i; Congressional Globe, Dec. 5, 1871, p. 15.

² Congressional Globe, April 9, 1872, p. 2300.

³ Ibid.

States than in Europe, continued to argue for cards with flaps to cover and conceal the writing surface.¹

Representative Hill's bill was tabled and no further action taken on it until late in the session when, spurred on by the 1872 Republican Party platform's declaration in favor of cheaper postage rates, both houses of Congress worked out a compromise. The style of the card was to be left to the discretion of Postmaster General Creswell. And since Creswell preferred the open card, it was a clear victory for Representative Hill. Unfortunately the authorization didn't fund the immediate printing of the cards. This authorization had to wait until December 1872 when the House Appropriations Committee gave its approval.²

On February 27, 1873 the Morgan Envelope Company of Springfield, Massachusetts, was awarded the contract for printing the cards, and by the end of April 1873 the Post Office Department had issued instructions governing the use of the cards.³ Under the heading of

¹ For the complete text of this interesting debate see

² Daily Iowa State Register, June 16, 1872; Fricke, p. i; As with many Congressmen involved in postal legislation, New Jersey's John Hill had personal experience in the system, having served as postmaster at Boonton, N.J. 1849-1853. Biographical Directory of the American Congress 1774-1961 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1961), p. 1053; Des Moines' Frank Palmer not only contributed his part through his membership on the House Appropriations Committee, but as a member of the Committee on Conference which arranged the compromise on Hill's bill in the closing days of the session. Daily Iowa State Register, June 16, 1872.

³ Fricke, p. i.

Requisitions the instructions stated that the Department would not furnish "less than 500 cards on order of a postmaster" and that individuals desiring cards must purchase them from a postmaster; "in no case can they obtain them upon direct application to the Department."¹

The great interest of Des Moines residents in the novel and inexpensive new means of communication is evidenced in the surprising amount of coverage the Register gave to the cards. According to the newspaper Postmaster Clarkson order 30,000 cards by April 25, had increased the order to 60,000 by May 25, and to 70,000 by May 29. The cards were first placed on sale at Springfield, Massachusetts, May 12, 1873, and the Register reported that the first one seen in Des Moines was one received by Mr. L. B. Abdill on May 16th.²

The Davenport, Iowa post office, having placed the largest order (100,000) of any Iowa office, was the first Iowa office to be supplied with postal cards. Their cards arrived May 23, 1873, and 16,000 were sold on the next day. The first cards sold in Des Moines were 25,000 loaned to Postmaster Clarkson through the kindness of Davenport postmaster Edward Russell. The Davenport cards arrived in Des Moines May 28, 1873, and were put on sale the next day. They were not nearly enough to supply the demand. Because various business firms had

¹ Daily Iowa State Register, May 4, 1873.

² Ibid., April 26, May 17, 25, and 29, 1873; On August 12, 1873 the Register seemingly corrected its earlier report by stating that the first card received in Des Moines was one sent by Charles W. Zeremba & Co. to lithographer George Lille and received May 8. In the same breath the newspaper said the first card sent from Des Moines was one from Thomas Shissler to Louis Grimmel mailed May 8; Fricke,

submitted orders totaling more than the 25,000 cards received Clarkson greatly reduced the orders "so that the general public can have a chance with the rest. For the present the cards will be sold only in small numbers."¹

All Des Moines put in the leisure hours of May 29, 1873 trying the new postal cards. Fourteen thousand were sold and 1,500 mailed that day. Most were sold in packages of one to two hundred. The Register reported that, "Had they been offered for sale in large lots over forty thousand would have been sold."² Within a week the 25,000 Davenport cards were all sold, but on June 2, 1873 the first 20,000 of Clarkson's initial order arrived. The unprecedented demand for the cards amazed the Register. "The pasteboards are popular now," said the editor, "whatever they may be after awhile. The popularity of the new thing does not seem to wear off with the novelty of it (Figure 126)."³

p. 39, reports a similar claim to a bizarre pre-May 2, 1873 use from Washington, D.C., and comments that it would have had to have been a sample card printed from the master die; These facts plus the 1982 sale of a UX1 used from Boston April 28, 1873, foster the belief that a small lot of cards from a cancelled early printing somehow "got out" and were used by the public. See letter of Calvet M. Hahn, Postal History Journal, No. 65 (1983), p. 54.

¹ Daily Iowa State Register, May 25 and 29, 1873; After the May 12 first day sale at Springfield, Mass. the cards were placed on sale May 13 at Hartford, Conn., May 14 in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., May 15 in Chicago and May 17 in St. Louis. Fricke, pp. 42-44, 46, 50-51, 56.

² Daily Iowa State Register, May 30, 1873.

³ Ibid., June 4, 1873.

Postmaster Clarkson blamed the big eastern cities for the difficulty experienced in obtaining cards for the Des Moines office. "Many of these cities have greedily ordered more than they need, and the consequence is, that smaller towns must wait for some time yet." Clarkson calculated that second class offices in the West would have to wait till the end of June to be supplied, and the lowest class offices even longer.¹ Fifty thousand additional cards, the third installment of Clarkson's initial order, arrived August 4, 1873. These cards were presumably the new small-watermark UX3 variety (Figure 127). They were also of a superior quality than some of the first cards sold:

The last lot are of the new and better kind; the paper or board on which the first lot were printed being so poor that further use of it was discontinued by the Department. The new cards are smoother and glossier, being free from the "fuzziness" and roughness of the old ones.²

Public use of the new postal card increased throughout the summer of 1873. Route agents on the railroads serving Des Moines noted that in August twice the number of cards were distributed as in July. It seems that the economic benefit of the card was recognized and shared by all. At the source, the government's cost for the cards (\$1.36 per

¹ Ibid., May 29, 1873.

² Ibid., Aug. 5, 1873; Fricke, pp. 65-69, shows that the fuzziness was attributed to press problems at the Morgan Envelope Co. and a defective lot of cardboard received from the Hudson & Cheney Paper Co. Correction of the problem required a press stoppage of only a few days; Fricke, pp. 81-82, also shows the earliest use of the small-watermark UX3 variety to have been from New York City July 6, 1873.

thousand) allowed a healthy profit.¹ With the general public the savings ascribed to the cards were obvious. The Register, quoting "a prudent man," gave an elaborate breakdown:

The cost of a good sheet of paper and a respectable envelope is at least two cents; time expended in writing, one cent; stamp three cents; making in all six cents. Now, three-fourths of the letters that are written may as well be sent in the postal card shape as in a sealed form, and in a great city where ten thousand, or more, are mailed every day, there may be a saving on one thousand of twenty dollars or more, or \$1,500 per week. To be within limits, we will say it is a saving of \$75,000 a year. Then, again, if four thousand out of five thousand letters sent are postal cards, there are four thousand human tongues exempted from the vulgar performance of licking the mucilage on an envelope, and following that up by taking in the gum of the stamp. The double process of licking makes eight thousand laps for four thousand tongues, which is an item sure enough. If one tongue had it all to do--and it would be a good way to employ some tongues--not over ten letters a minute could be gummed and got ready for mailing. That would be six hundred an hour, and it would take nearly twelve hours to finish up eight thousand. Under such circumstances one might well exclaim with the poet:

"Oh, for a thousand tongues!"

Now all this labor we have mentioned may be saved, and people can, if they choose, send just as many letters, have more time and money, and if they like take their mucilage in gumdrops by the quantity, and use their tongues for other purposes.²

One rather absurd aspect of postal cards was also pointed out. Although a good writer might, for the cost of 1¢, put several thousand words on a card, let him paste on a printed slip containing a single word and the cost would skyrocket to 6¢ (1¢ paid for the card and 5¢ collected from the recipient). However, if a person pasted a printed slip on a card the size of a postal card, and enclosed the whole in an

¹ Daily Iowa State Register, April 29 and Sept. 25, 1873.

² Ibid., June 10, 1873.

open envelope, the government would send it through the mail for only 1¢! How ridiculous, thought the Register, "to carry five thousand or more [printed] words in an envelope for a cent and then charge six cents for carrying half a dozen [printed] words [pasted] on a card without the envelope."¹

What the Register recommended was the printing of notes on the back of cards. This practice added no additional post charge. Businessmen in particular, advised the newspaper,

will find these cards very convenient, by having a regular note head printed on them. Some persons are having short circulars printed. Others are having a mere announcement of their business. With the aid of the printer these cards can be put to most any use. There is great economy in their use, and they will at once in a great measure take the place of note heads, letter heads, cards, circulars, &c., &c. THE REGISTER JOB OFFICE is prepared to do this sort of work with promptness and neatly, and at low rates (Figure 128).²

The two varieties of the 1873-issue postal card were in general use in Des Moines for two to two-and-a-half years (Figures 129 and 130). Their great popularity with the public is a matter of record. But what of the original Congressional fear regarding the possible misuse of the cards? The public at first expressed some fear of the lack of privacy associated with the open back of the cards. A few individuals even tried to turn this fear into a new business opportunity by devising all sorts of cipher systems for sale to the business community.³ But

¹ Ibid., March 28, 1874; Fricke, p. 70, shows that some "paste on" cards were forwarded without additional charge.

² Daily Iowa State Register, June 3, 1873.

³ Ibid., May 20, 1873.

their belief that merchants would want to transact their business in a code undecipherable to Post Office Department employees proved false. The idea failed for two reasons. First, the use of a code would have confused customers and taken so much time as to negate the time-saving advantage that was central to the concept of the postal card. Second, folks soon realized that postal clerks had no time to read ordinary business notes even if they should be so inclined.

As to obscene messages, only two mentions of such appear in the Register in the period 1873-1875. The first involved some Des Moines boys "or excuses for young men" who deposited several vulgar cards in an effort to insult young women. The cards were destroyed by the post office staff and the notice of this "blackguardism" was accompanied by a warning of the \$25 to \$500 fine allowed for the prosecution of such offenses.¹ The second mention had to do with cases in O'Brien and Monroe counties that were actually brought to court, the first of their kind in Iowa. Both offenses involved cards with libelous messages mailed to men.²

Clearly, the objections voiced to Representative John Hill's postal-card bill were overblown. As one of the bill's supporters, Representative James Tyner of Indiana, said at the time the bill was being debated,

the objection, in my opinion, amounts to nothing. Why, sir, under our present laws any man may write a slander upon the back of an

¹ Ibid., June 4, 1873.

² Ibid., April 20, 1875.

envelope and deposit it in the post office. It has been done time and again. But the law in such a case steps in and protects the party intended to be reached by the slander; it provides that an envelope so written shall not be delivered. . . . If any man is so lost to honor as to attempt to slander another, and shall use one of these postal cards as a means of doing so, this bill provides that the card shall not be delivered. Therefore, the only party who will see the slander is the post office clerk; and he has the same chances of seeing such slanders now.¹

The fifth, and by far the most important postal development of 1873 in Des Moines was the inauguration of free house-to-house mail delivery. For this benefit, even more than the east-side branch post office or the 1873-issue post card, Des Moines was indebted to Fifth District Representative Frank Palmer (Figure 131). Palmer, in charge of postal affairs on the powerful House Appropriations Committee, had one main objective in mind as he maneuvered post office appropriation bills through the 42nd Congress--the extension of the free delivery system to Des Moines.

When anything got in the way of Palmer's objective, such as the desire of New York and Philadelphia representatives to increase the pay of existing letter-carriers, he opposed it. He was not the least bit evasive in his stance, but openly proclaimed himself against any increase in carrier pay because,

I happen to live in a city of about fifteen thousand inhabitants [Des Moines], and the people there are as anxious for this free delivery of postal matter as are the inhabitants of New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, or any other large city. If we increase the salaries of letter-carriers we must expect to postpone the

¹ Congressional Globe, April 9, 1872, p. 2302.

day when the smaller cities can share with the larger ones the benefits of this free postal delivery.¹

The most serious opposition to Palmer's cherished desire to have the free delivery system extended to smaller cities came from those representatives from rural districts who resented an increase in free delivery expenditures for the sole benefit of the urban population. They not only opposed the extension of free delivery but argued that the existing system, if not made self-supportive, should be abolished. The chief spokesman for this group, Omar D. Conger of Port Huron, Michigan, insisted that free-delivery legislation favored the wealthy at the expense of the poor:

They insist there shall be special private messengers, to take free of any charge whatever, to and from post offices in those cities, to accommodate the wealthy business men, all their letters and communications, while the citizens of every other part of the country are compelled to go at their own expense to the post office in their own town, or to the post office five or ten or fifteen miles from their homes in the country, as is the case in many of the sparsely settled portions of the country, where we are told we cannot have post offices because the expenses of the postal system are so far in excess of its receipts. . . . I say, Mr. Chairman, that our postal system is not designed to be for the special benefit of business men . . . I oppose this because it brings privileges to a few chosen places of the nation, for which the rest of the country have to pay.²

Postal deficits and the opposition of Conger's group discouraged Palmer from attempting an extension of free delivery in 1872, but on

¹ Congressional Globe, March 8, 1872, p. 1546; New York, Philadelphia, and St. Louis were among the first forty-nine cities authorized free delivery in 1863. Chicago joined the program in 1864.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 1553-54; G. A. Finkeinburg of Missouri challenged Conger's view, saying that the bankers he knew in St. Louis (who had enjoyed the benefit of free delivery since 1863) still retained their post office boxes and had clerks to send after their mail, but it was

February 5, 1873, encouraged by the projected cut in postal deficits promised by the abolishment of the franking privilege, Palmer got fellow Iowa representative Aylett R. Cotton to introduce an amendment calling for the extension of free delivery to "every place containing a population of twenty thousand within the delivery of its post office."¹

Cotton pointed out that although the law of March 3, 1865, had authorized the appointment of carriers in all cities of 50,000, previous Postmasters General had used their own discretion in giving the service to twenty-six cities of less than 50,000 population. Erie, Pennsylvania, for instance, had free delivery even though her population was only 19,000! Wasn't it only fair that the remaining nineteen cities of between 20,000 and 50,000 inhabitants without free delivery be granted the service? Postmaster General Creswell favored it, but wanted Congress to provide for such with a general provision.²

the laborer and mechanic who had no time to go to the post office without losing their wages, who needed the service. Ibid., p. 1554.

¹ Ibid., Feb. 5, 1873, p. 1121.

² Ibid., pp. 1121-22; Cities of less than 50,000 (1870 census) with free delivery in Jan. 1873 were Cambridge, Mass. (39,000), Charleston, Mass. (28,000), Dayton, Ohio (30,000), Erie, Pa. (19,000), Harrisburg, Pa. (23,000), Hartford, Conn. (37,000), Indianapolis, Ind. (36,000), Lancaster, Pa. (20,000), Lawrence, Mass. (28,000), Lowell, Mass. (40,000), Lynn, Mass. (28,000), Manchester, N.H. (23,000), Memphis, Tenn. (40,000), Nashville, Tenn. (25,000), New Bedford, Mass. (21,000), Portland, Me. (31,000), Reading, Pa. (33,000), Salem, Mass. (24,000), Syracuse, N.Y. (43,000), Toledo, Ohio (31,000), Trenton, N.J. (22,000), Troy, N.Y. (45,000), Utica, N.Y. (28,000), Wilmington, Del. (30,000), Worcester, Mass. (41,000). Non-free-delivery cities of between 50,000 and 20,000 (1870) census) in Jan. 1873 were Charleston, S.C. (48,000), Scranton, Pa. (35,000), Columbus, Ohio (31,000), Paterson, N.J. (33,000), Kansas City, Mo. (32,000), Mobile, Ala. (32,000), Fall River, Mass. (26,000), Springfield, Mass. (26,000), Peoria, Ill. (25,000),

In answer to Leonard Myers of Philadelphia who again raised the question of increasing carrier salaries, Cotton mirrored Palmer's stance of wishing to hold down costs in order "to have the service in the young cities of the West where it has hitherto been denied on the ground that it was supposed to be expensive to the Government."¹ Cotton argued that free delivery was not expensive, that in the West good carriers could be furnished at the current pay rate. In fact, he noted:

The postmaster at Davenport, Iowa, who desired to obtain this service there, told me that he could obtain carriers at from six to seven hundred dollars a year instead of \$1,000. I am therefore for limiting the expenses and not increasing the wages of these carriers. We have not in Iowa a single city having this service, and I wish to have the system extended and not to increase its expenses.²

Michigan representative Conger again objected on principle to the basic concept of the whole system, asserting that he would support it if those enjoying its benefits were charged an increased amount to cover its expenses. "Let a cent postage be had and we will pay it all up. But the postage remains the same, with delivery and without delivery."³ However, William D. Kelley of Philadelphia and Nathaniel P. Banks of Massachusetts soon put down this notion by reminding Conger

Covington, Ky. (24,000), Quincy, Ill. (24,000), Evansville, Ind. (22,000), Oswego, N.Y. (20,000), Elizabeth, N.J. (20,000), Savannah, Ga. (20,000), Poughkeepsie, N.Y. (20,000), Camden, N.J. (20,000), Davenport, Iowa (20,000), St. Paul, Minn. (20,000). Ibid., p. 1122.

¹ Ibid., p. 1122.

² Ibid., p. 1122.

³ Ibid., pp. 1122, 1124,

that private carriers, such as Blood's Dispatch of Philadelphia, had long ago proven that local delivery could be accomplished at less than the government's charge, and for this reason existing free-delivery cities

would be glad to take their postage into their own hands. If the Government allowed them to provide for the carrying of their own letters, they could enjoy mail facilities and privileges at much less cost, probably at one cent a letter less. They now pay three cents on each letter in order that my friend from Michigan [Mr. Conger] can have mail routes through his section of the country. . . . But for the fact that the large cities and towns pay more than the actual cost of their own letter-carrying, the gentleman and his constituents could not have the postal facilities they now enjoy.¹

When the extension amendment finally came to a vote it passed by the narrow margin of 97 yeas to 77 nays, with 66 not voting. Like the debate which preceded it, the vote reflected the old quarrel between urban and rural America. While the majority vote of most Midwestern and Eastern states was for extension, most Southern states voted against it. The few Southern votes in favor of extension came from those representatives from large cities which either already had the service or stood a good chance of soon being included in the system. The only one of Iowa's six representatives voting against the measure was Madison M. Walden of Centerville (Appanoose Co., 1873 population of 1,271).²

¹ Ibid., pp. 1124-25, the quote being Banks'; Representatives Kelley and Myers of Philadelphia also pointed out the irony of the fact that since the enactment of the "Cheap Postage Law" of 1851, urban districts had been building postal deficits by voting for the extension of unprofitable Southern and Western routes, but now that the cities needed a little help the rural districts were uncooperative. Ibid.

² Ibid., Feb. 6, 1873, p. 1162; Those states with majorite votes in favor were Conn., Ill., Ind., Iowa., Kan., La., Me., Mass., Minn.,

In Des Moines the first Register notice of the February 6, 1873 House vote on the free-delivery extension amendment followed soon after and was decidedly optimistic:

Should the joint resolution which passed the House during the past week, through the efforts of Representatives Palmer and Cotton, of this state . . . pass the Senate, as now appears probable, Des Moines will come under the provision, and our people will have their mail delivered at their homes and gathered from their doors. As receipts of the Des Moines office are at least three times greater than its expenses, we are clearly entitled to the benefits of the carrier system.¹

Regardless of the receipts of the Des Moines office, it is hard to understand just why the Register felt so sure that the city would come under the new provision. The 1870 federal census showed Des Moines possessed a population of not 20,000 but only 12,035. By 1872 the county assessor estimated the population had grown to 14,436, and by June 1873 to 15,061. But by 1875 a decline in business growth, brought about by the panic of 1873, actually decreased Des Moines' population to 14,443.²

The only conclusion one can make from the available facts is that, despite legislative intent, the 1873 extension amendment did not remove

Miss., Mo., Nev., N.J., N.Y., N.C., Ohio., R.I., S.C., & Wis. The states whose majority vote was against were Ala., Fla., Ga., Ky., Md., Mich., N.H., Oreg., Pa., Tenn., Tex., Vt., Va., & W. Va. The vote of Ark. and Calif. was evenly split. Ibid.

¹ Daily Iowa State Register, Feb. 9, 1873.

² Ibid., June 22, 1872, June 25, 1873; Historical and Comparative Census of Iowa, 1836-1880, p. 567; It wasn't until 1880 that Des Moines registered a large enough population (22,408) to have technically qualified it for inclusion in the free-delivery system under the published rules of the 1873 extension amendment. Ibid.

the power of the Postmaster General to bend the rules at his own discretion, especially when he wanted to reward a friend. Further evidence for such a conclusion is found in the following letter from Creswell to Palmer:

Postoffice Department,
March 3d 1873.

My Dear Palmer: --

In answer to your question about Des Moines, I take pleasure in saying that your city will be included in the list of those to which the new free delivery service will be applied, if it can be shown that there are 20,000 people within the delivery of that office.

I can congratulate you on the passage of the Postoffice Appropriation Bill in such unexceptional [sic] shape, and I thank you most cordially for the very efficient service you have rendered in bringing about the result; especially does this apply to that portion of the bill which relates to the free delivery system.

Very Truly Yours,

JNO. A. J. CRESWELL, P.M.G. ¹

Creswell's italics were probably understood by both the writer and recipient as emphasizing the need for a little "creative" padding to make the thing work. That's apparently what took place for the seventeen rural Polk County post offices in existence in 1873, some located only a few miles from the capital city, left little room for additional "delivery area" population figures to be added to the Des Moines figure.

In any event, Des Moines Postmaster "Ret" Clarkson immediately set to work gathering the necessary figures and by late June the Register proudly published the formal notice of the city's acceptance into the system:

¹ Daily Iowa State Register, March 8, 1873.

Postoffice Department
Washington, June 21, 1873

To Hon. F. W. Palmer, Chicago, Ill.: --

SIR:--I am directed by the Postmaster-General to say in reply to your letter of the 11th inst., that the free delivery system will be established in Des Moines, Iowa, as you advised, as early as practicable, probably by the first of July. Four letter carriers will be allowed.

Very respectfully,
JAMES H. MARR,
Acting Assistant Postmaster Gen'l. ¹

In publishing this letter the Register couldn't help but brag that "With this latest improvement, no city in the United States of the size and population of Des Moines will have as complete postal facilities."² The city would be divided into four districts for the carriers, with service to begin about the middle of July 1873. Service could not begin on the July 1st date specified in the formal announcement letter, for one important prerequisite was missing--a uniform numbering system for all business firms, streets, and houses.³

Very soon after House passage of the extension amendment, local authorities began groping with the numbering problem. The Register pointed out the obvious fact that in order for a correspondent to direct a letter in a manner precise enough for a mail carrier to quickly deliver it, he must have a number address:

One would hardly like to put on a letter: "John Jones, Sycamore Street, between the alley, between Twelfth and Thirteenth, south

¹ Ibid., June 22, 1873.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

side of the street, next door to John Smithfield, Des Moines, Iowa." It wouldn't look pretty, and then your correspondents would get tired of writing it. If the number is not given the postman can't find you, and you won't get the benefit of the free delivery, but your mail will go to the Post Office, as now.¹

Actually, a number system did exist in the business district, but it was too cumbersome. It began at the end of a street and numbered alternately down each side carrying the numbers too high. The Register recommended the Philadelphia plan by which each street was numbered by hundreds, the odd numbers on one side and the even numbers on the other, with a north-south dividing line to further simplify things. Such a system would present little possibility of mistake. "A stranger gets off the cars, looks at a directory and finds that John Smith lives at 640 North Second. He knows at a glance that this is just six blocks north of Walnut." The city council agreed and secured a copy of the Philadelphia ordinance governing such. The next step was the decision of just how to physically implement the new numbers.²

The inclination of the city council to use tin plates with the numbers painted on them was criticized by some who feared the paint would wear off and the tin rust out. "While we are doing this work it were better to start right than wrong, and painted tin letters will not withstand the driving storms of Iowa many years."³ A city mechanic presented a much-liked specimen of japanned tin plate with brass, nickel-plated numbers, but the cost was too prohibitive for general

¹ Ibid., March 8, 1873.

² Ibid., March 30, May 3, 1873.

³ Ibid., July 13, 1873.

use. On July 18, 1873, the city finally let the contract for lettering the streets to Wiley Ray, at 40¢ for each street. John C. Kelley got the job of numbering the houses at 25¢ each. The street names were to be painted on japanned tin, in letters large enough to read across the street. The house numbers were to be cast of type metal; first the figures were molded in a composition of soap stone and plaster of paris; moistened with a solution of gum arabic, then the mold was heated before being filled with type metal. The finished mold would then be sawed, trimmed, holes punched in the corners, and painted. The casting was to be done at Alderman Mills' stereotype foundry using a numbered Pelton city map as a guide.¹

Although manufacture of house numbers commenced at the rate of three hundred a day it was still estimated that the job of getting them up all over town would take five weeks to complete, this while impatient residents clamored for the commencement of their authorized free-delivery service.² Postmaster Clarkson at first justified the delay by citing the numerous problems encountered by Iowa's other two new free

¹ Ibid., July 19, 1873; One of the most interesting aspects of house numbering was the source of the metal used for the molds. It was the first lot of newspaper type carried to Des Moines in 1849 to print the Iowa Star. All 1,000 pounds of it had been salvaged from the old Statesman office. "What a world of history those old types could tell. They followed the Democratic party in all their charges, from Simon-pure anti-darkeyism through all the theories of Locofocoism to the first political campaign against Grant, and now, at last, have reached something stable--the door posts of Des Moines. Well, really, its about the best thing they ever did. The old types never did much service as political guides, but they will do first rate to pilot lost pedestrians." Ibid., Aug. 6, 1873.

² Ibid., July 19 and 25, 1873.

delivery cities (Davenport and Dubuque), which had begun their carrier service before their houses were numbered. "The advice of the postmasters there is that no postmaster anywhere else should attempt it. The difficulties . . . cannot be comprehended by those outside of . . . postoffice work."¹

The Register criticized city officials for delaying free delivery by their "dilatoriness" in the numbering job and said the matter did not reflect well on Des Moines.² But the numbering work could not be done any faster, and Postmaster Clarkson finally gave in to public pressure. A partial inauguration of carrier service was begun on the evening of Thursday, July 24, 1873. It was limited to the "more thickly-settled portions of the city" (between 1st & 12th and Lyon & Market on the east side, and between 1st & 13th and Center & Elm on the west side). These boundaries were to be extended as the house-numbering project progressed (Figure 132).³

Not wishing to anger anyone by forcing the new system upon them, Clarkson at first asked those wishing to participate to leave their names at the post office. The name slips were to include the names of all family members and the location of their residence:

For the present, no one will be urged to have their mail delivered. The Postmaster will depend upon making the system efficient in order to make it popular. Those who shall be willing to accept of the service at once, will be served as promptly and as faithfully as possible. To those who want to "wait and see," no other argument than that of their own wishes and interests will be made. It is something new; it cannot be made to work like clock-work at

¹ Ibid., July 13, 1873.

² Ibid., July 16, 1873.

³ Ibid., July 22 and 25, 1873.

first. When it is demonstrated that the mail can be delivered at the door, as safely and more promptly than the owner can go for it, there will be none who will long refuse to avail themselves of the convenience.¹

Identification of the four letter carriers employed to initiate the free-delivery system in Des Moines was announced in early July. Archey Christy was given the northeastern district of the city, John A. King the southeastern, Farron Olmsted southwestern, and William Hoppee the northwestern. Each district was drawn in an irregular manner so as to give each carrier a portion of the business district. The four carriers were clothed in uniforms consisting of West Point or blue gray, trimmed with black binding and regulation buttons. By late September a regulation cap was also added to the uniform, one of which had already seen two years of service in the free-delivery system of Philadelphia.² The uniforms were pronounced "handsome and neat" and justified by a postal regulation which required that carriers always be in uniform while on duty so that "they may be identified to all and the more easily recognized by those who happen to have need for their services" (Figure 133).³

That the uniforms had a morale-boosting effect on the carriers is evidenced by one of them showing off his uniform on the streets ten days before the system was even put into operation.⁴ The men needed

¹ Ibid., July 25, 1873.

² Ibid., July 10, Sept. 26, Oct. 9, 1873.

³ Ibid., July 10, 1873.

⁴ Ibid., July 15, 1873.

something to keep their spirits up, for Postmaster Clarkson certainly didn't pamper them in their work schedule. Four deliveries a day were planned:

The first, general, throughout the whole district, of letters and papers, beginning at 7:30 A.M.; the second, a business letter delivery, in the business part of the city, after the arrival of the Western mail, at 1:30 P.M.; the third, another business delivery directly after the arrival of the Rock Island Eastern at 3:45 P.M.; the fourth, a general delivery, of letters and papers, after the arrival of the Valley Mails (reaching here at 5 P.M.) at 5:15 P.M.¹

Although there would be no mail delivery on Sundays the carriers were required to be on duty at the city's two post offices between 8 and 10 A.M. to wait on the patrons from their different routes who wanted to call for their mail in person.²

By August 5, 1873, nearly all the houses in Des Moines, from the river west as far as number 600, had been numbered, and by August 30 numbering had progressed far enough for the original free-delivery boundary lines to be extended. By early October 1873 only South Des Moines and Cottage Grove (northern fringe of the city) remained to be brought into the system.³ As free delivery slowly spread across the city Postmaster Clarkson patiently introduced the department's suggestions for improving the service. Participants were strongly urged to provide their own private letter boxes,

either on their door posts, or hung inside of their door, and reached by an aperture or slot, or if they will make merely the

¹ Ibid., July 22, 1873.

² Ibid., July 26, 1873.

³ Ibid., Aug. 6, Aug. 31, and Oct. 8, 1873.

latter, allowing the mail to be dropped inside on the floor. . . . Every minute you keep a carrier waiting at the door, is that much delayal of the mail of others. Frequently the carriers are kept waiting three minutes, sometimes five.¹

The Register noted that letter boxes could be procured from any of the hardware men advertising in the newspaper, or from the printing house of Carter, Hussy & Curl. The box the Register recommended was the wooden one patented by J. S. Blake. It was weatherproof, framed with a bureau lock, and cheaper than most other boxes.²

With the house-numbering project nearing completion Postmaster Clarkson also notified the public that they should at once inform their correspondents of the numbers:

This will greatly facilitate the work of the carriers and make more certain the delivery. Letters so directed cannot be wrongly delivered. In this way, too, such members of a family as get letters but seldom, and whose given names are comparatively unknown at the postoffice and by the carriers, will have less trouble and more certainty in receiving their mail.³

Although some residents complied immediately with this request (Figure 134) most either did not, or their correspondents did not follow their instructions. Numbered street addresses on incoming correspondence to Des Moines do not seem to have become the norm until the 1880s (Figure 135) and unnumbered addresses in the 1890s are far from uncommon (Figure 136). Perhaps the problem was that until free

¹ Ibid., Aug. 10, 1873.

² Ibid., July 27 and 30, 1873 and Dec. 24, 1874.

³ Ibid., Aug. 10, 1873.

delivery was extended to towns of 10,000 and under most people had little respect for the needs of the system.¹

Clarkson warned that the free-delivery system would not go like "clockwork" at first, but it is surprising how little trouble was encountered during the two-and-one-half month period of implementation. Merchants' complaints regarding the small size of their building numbers and a delayed acknowledgement of the increased drop-letter rate (from 1¢ to 2¢) are about the only things that can be mentioned.² However, complaints of a more philosophical nature were quite evident, particularly from those of a different political persuasion who wanted to downplay the importance of the Palmer-Clarkson triumph in obtaining the service. When a rival Des Moines newspaper belittled the idea of free delivery by challenging the position of Des Moines as the smallest city in the system and stating that four carriers were hardly enough, the Register declared its competitor to be,

jaundiced with the envy of a clique. . . . It can't name a single city "of the size of Des Moines," which "has come into the possession of free delivery recently." . . . There is a carrier to the

¹ It was not until 1887 that Congress authorized the postmaster general to establish free delivery in towns of 10,000. From that time on postmasters general also used their own discretion in extending the service to even smaller towns when they agreed to build and maintain good streets and sidewalks, and to number their houses. By the end of WW 1 more than 2,000 towns and cities had free delivery. Fuller, p. 74.

² Daily Iowa State Register, July 25, July 31, and Aug. 3, 1873; Vandalism was a problem with the new street signs. "Mischievous boys or men have drawn the nails, and in some instances, torn the tin. One at the corner of Tenth and Locust hangs by a single nail." Ibid., Aug. 23, 1873.

same proportionate number of people that there is in all cities having the system. . . . The four carriers will be able to serve Des Moines as well as the larger cities are served.¹

The Register also criticized its rival's statement that the system would allow East Des Moines only one carrier, and require the closing of the east-side branch post offices:

The Postmaster . . . has nominated two East Side gentlemen as carriers, and . . . has heard nothing of the East Side office being discontinued. . . . As the paper in question did nothing whatever in securing the establishment of an office on that Side, neither will it, we think, have sufficient influence to have it abolished now.²

In fairness to the rival newspaper it should be noted that four carriers did not prove sufficient for the job. By October 1873 two more men were added to the force. Conscious of the cost-accounting disdain for the system that existed in some quarters Clarkson was quick to publish statistics that seemed to prove that both a four and six-carrier system in Des Moines were self-supporting. The figures, for instance, showed that during the month of August 1873 Des Moines carriers delivered and collected more letters than carriers in Springfield, Mass.; Minneapolis, Minn.; Savannah, Ga.; Atlanta, Ga.; Mobile, Ala.; or St. Paul, Minn.; all of which had from three to seventeen thousand more people than Des Moines.³

For further comparison Clarkson also obtained the free-delivery statistics from the other two Iowa towns, Davenport and Dubuque,

¹ Ibid., June 24, 1873.

² Ibid., June 29, 1873.

³ Ibid., Oct. 8 and Nov. 6, 1873.

participating in the system. The Register's touting of Des Moines' top showing in this group brought on a bragging contest between itself and the Davenport Gazette which went on for months. The exchange began when the Register, calling attention to the 10,000-item difference between the mail delivered and collected in Des Moines and Davenport during October 1873 (Figure 137), labeled its rival a good little river town, selling lots of onions, but "small potatoes on the letter question."¹ In a more sober tone the Register claimed that the difference showed that, despite having 6,000 less population and one less carrier than Davenport, "the people of Des Moines are much more a reading public. . . . And Davenport claims to be the metropolis of the state, while Des Moines was only twenty years ago 'the Raccoon Forks.'"² Furthermore, the nearly \$5,000 margin Des Moines registered over Davenport's money-order business for the same period showed that the capital city's wholesale trade was one-fifth larger than Davenport's.³ The Davenport Gazette retorted that:

The State officials are at Des Moines with their infinitude of correspondence and receipt of hundreds of money orders each month. The United States Circuit Court was in session there in October, and the Clerk of the Iowa Supreme Court has his headquarters there. If Des Moines were but a village of 2,000 inhabitants, with not a dozen stores in it, her post-office business would be immense under such circumstances: The post-office business there no more indicates the trade of the city, than does the building of the new State House indicate "great building enterprise on the part of the Des Moines people." One of these days,

¹ Ibid., Nov. 6, 1873.

² Ibid., Nov. 9, 1873.

³ Ibid.

without doubt, THE REGISTER will be boasting over the new Capitol, built by taxing the people of the whole State for it, as a Simon-pure Des Moines institution, and crowing over other Iowa cities because they can't afford a \$2,000,000 house! This would be about as consistent as its little yarn about its post-office business.¹

The Register ridiculed all of this with the information that during the month of October the state offices received only \$81.10 in money orders. And although no mention was made of incoming and outgoing state-office mail for October the Register later said, in reporting Des Moines' January 1874 statistics, that they did not include the legislative or State House mail.² The only area of postal service in which the Register conceded the river towns excelled was that of drop postcards:

This is accounted for by the fact that the postal card is so much more popular in those cities than in this. Perhaps our Des Moines merchants don't use the cheap yellows in sending their business williams nor our girls use the same one-cent messages for their sweet billie-doozies, as they evidently do at Davenport and Dubuque.³

The simple fact that the Register kept returning to in the months to come was that Des Moines, with nearly one-third less population, was writing more letters, reading more newspapers, and doing more business than Davenport or Dubuque. No matter what else such figures might signify they did support Clarkson's claim that in Des Moines free delivery was a paying proposition:

It has so much increased the revenue from local or drop postage, that that revenue alone now pays the salaries of all the carriers.

¹ Ibid., Nov. 12, 1873.

² Ibid., Nov. 12, 1873 and Feb. 22, 1874.

³ Ibid., Dec. 7, 1873.

This is sufficient answer to the cavil of all croakers. If Des Moines, in its item of drop letters, pays the whole expense of the carriers, we do not see that anybody has a right to growl about its people having the benefits of the privilege. . . . There are very few with whom the system is not popular.¹

So despite the political skulduggery involved in winning free delivery for Des Moines it can not be said to have contributed to the nation's postal deficit. And what a boon the resulting service was to the quality of life in Des Moines! How remarkable, also, is the fact that Des Moines was not only the smallest free-delivery city in the nation in 1873, but one of the youngest. In thirty short years the community at the Racoon fork of the Des Moines River had grown from a small cluster of army cabins to a city, from an irregular military "express" to free delivery!

¹ Ibid., June 23, 1874.

CHAPTER TEN

Conclusions

The remarkable advance in postal service experienced by the city of Des Moines during the first thirty years of its existence can, like the city's corresponding commercial success, be attributed to strategic location, energetic businessmen, and a determined manipulation of political process.

The first organized system of written communication at the site of the future city developed because abundant natural resources at the juncture of the Des Moines and Raccoon River determined the location of Fort Des Moines No. 2. By the 1850s the central location of the town of Fort Des Moines (midway between Iowa City and Council Bluffs and between the Missouri line and the upper Des Moines River settlements) made the town not only an important supply point but increased its mail service as a juncture point of cross posts authorized for the more distant towns. The 1855 decision to relocate the state capital in Des Moines was made partly on the basis of the town's central location, and the resulting growth in population facilitated the political argument for improved postal service. When the Civil War interrupted service on the Hannibal & St. Joseph Railroad, Des Moines' central location between Fort Kearney and Chicago placed the city on the new overland mail route to California. After the Civil War, when the Chicago & North Western and Chicago & Rock Island railroad lines were pushed west, Des Moines' central location again brought the city great

benefit. These railroads passed so close to the Capital City that businessmen were able, at much less cost than their support of the Des Moines Valley Railroad, to tap into the business and mail advantages offered by these direct rail links with Chicago.

As important as location was in the development of mid-nineteenth century towns and postal service, it did need a catalyst for proper activation. This was supplied by stalwart businessmen who broadcast the advantages of their location in everyday dealings. Seven of the eight Des Moines postmasters holding office during the first thirty years were businessmen who carried on their own private enterprise while serving as postmaster:

| <u>Postmaster</u> | <u>Private Business</u> | <u>Advantage of Postmastership</u> |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Thomas K. Brooks (1846-47) | Doctor | Meet clients who came to mail letters |
| Phineas M. Casady (1847-49) | Lawyer | Meet clients, franking privilege, and political base |
| Robert L. Tidrick (1849) | Lawyer | Meet clients and franking privilege |
| Hoyt Sherman (1849-53) | Realtor | Meet clients and franking privilege |
| Wesley Redhead (1853-61) | Stationery dealer | Shop located in post office gave him captive market for product most needed by post office patrons |
| John Teesdale (1861-67) | (Retired newspaper editor) | Lucrative salary given as reward for political service |
| Geo. C. Tichenor (1867-71) | Lumber company | Lucrative salary and useful political base |
| J. S. Clarkson (1871-79) | Newspaper editor | Lucrative salary and useful political base |

The five postmasters who served before the Civil War sought or accepted the job of postmaster not primarily for the low salary the

office provided, but for the business advantages the position offered. By 1861 growth in Des Moines post office receipts finally boosted the postmaster salary to a level where the office was sought not as a supplement to other business income but as a primary source of income, a political plum which made John Teesdale the first Des Moines postmaster able to subsist on the postmastership alone.¹ The transformation of the office into a far more attractive political plum also enhanced its status as a political base, one which was fully exploited by George Tichenor and J. S. Clarkson. Although there are exceptions to the rule, it is an accurate generalization that before the Civil War the Des Moines postmastership was sought by businessmen, and after the war by politicians. Evidence shows that each of these postmasters, true to the booster code, used the mail and the local press to advertise the growth of their town and its postal service. They were just as quick to

¹ From 1792-1863 postmaster compensation was determined on a commission basis. The commission rate, in order to fairly compensate postmasters, varied over the years according to postage rates and the volume of mail. In 1847 the rate was 30% of the first \$100 of letter postage, 25% of the amount between \$100 and \$400, and 20% of the amount between \$400 and \$2,400. By 1854 the 5¢ and 10¢ postage rates of 1847 had been reduced to 3¢, reducing the amount postmasters could earn and increasing their work load by multiplying mail volume, so the commission on letter postage was increased to 60% of the first \$100, 50% of the next \$300, and 40% of the next \$2,000. In 1864 postmaster compensation was changed from a commission basis to fixed salaries. At first class offices (those collecting at least \$3,000 in receipts) postmasters were to receive \$3,000-\$4000 per year, at second class offices (receipts of at least \$2,000) \$2,000-\$3,000 a year, at third class offices (receipts of at least \$1,000) \$1,000-\$2,000 a year, and at fourth class offices (receipts of at least \$100) \$100-\$999 a year. Postal Laws and Regulations for the Government of the Post Office Department (1847; rpt., Holland, Mich.: Theron Wierenga, 1980), p. 9, sec. 14; List of Post Offices in the United States . . . Also the Principal Regulations of the Post Office Department (Washington, D.C.: J. Shillington, 1855), p. 32; Post Office Directory

announce the town's need for additional postal service, and to campaign for it to satisfy their own and the community's business needs.

The means for satisfying the demand for improved postal service, created by the application of booster spirit to a good location, was political process. Congressmen were first petitioned to aid in the establishment of a post office, and then to work for improved delivery to the office. In return for such Congressional service rendered, postmasters and other local party members were obligated to use every means at their disposal to promote the reelection of their Congressman and to further the national goals of the party. A post office, once established, often promoted political goals aside from those held by the Congressman who had secured establishment. Many postmasters used the prestige of their office as a stepping-stone to a political career of their own. And when town and postal growth boosted postmaster salaries to a high level, the postmastership itself became the object of bitter inter-party struggles. Party politics, usually introduced into a town through the establishment of the post office, soon permeated the town by filling the pages of the local press and coloring all community views.

Because of such political saturation it is difficult, when studying the broad scope of postal service, to separate postal history from political history. The same problem exists in relation to postal versus urban and business history. The Boorstin upstart theme of "the

for 1866 (New York: American News Co., n.d.), p. xxi; Fuller, pp. 297-301. See Appendix C for chart giving available statistics on Des Moines postmaster compensation and post office receipts in the period 1846-1871.

interfusing of public and private prosperity" is so prevalent that each topic depends on the other for the proper retelling of the story. On the other hand, these problems of focus do serve to demonstrate the value of postal history as an adjunct of political and urban history.

In a much narrower vein, this study of the early postal history of Des Moines shows that postal matters played a greater role in everyday life than Atherton and other urban historians have heretofore indicated. Des Moines newspapers show intense public interest in postal delivery time, postal rates, postage stamps, stationery, and postcards. These same sources also show Des Moines participating in the enjoyment of these postal improvements either shortly after or, in the case of free delivery, before other cities of comparable size. In the case of the Postal Association's remission labels it was even local innovation that produced a service that, like free delivery, was at the time only available in a very select group of American cities.

Finally, surviving examples of early Des Moines covers and letters prove that postal efforts to unite the city with the greater American community succeeded. This mail, written on the same wide variety of stationery found in larger towns, often dealing with important questions or events of the time, and addressed to all parts of the nation, reflects not a people in the backwater of society, but the mainstream of mid-nineteenth century American culture.

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APPENDIX A

Figures 1 through 137

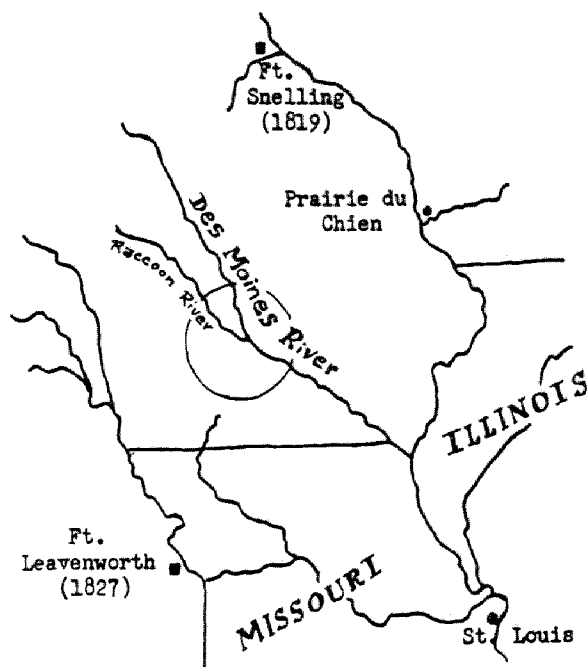


Fig. 1. The Physical Setting

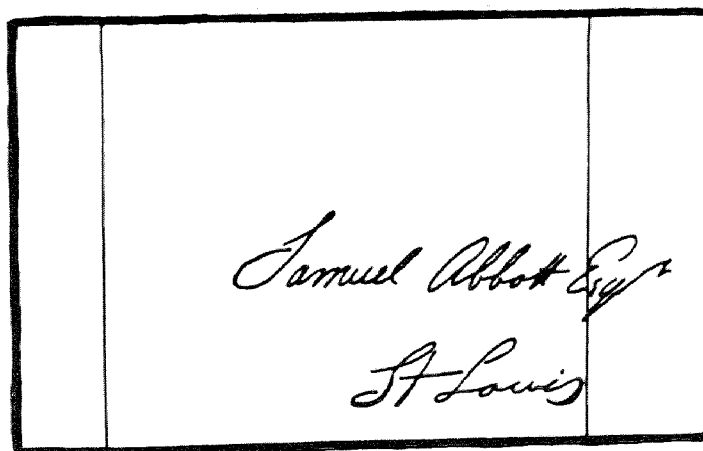


Fig. 2. River des Moin Feb. 27th 1824 is the heading of this early fur trade letter from the Des Moines River Valley. After requesting that the bearer be paid for services rendered the writer, Russell Farnham, says that he hopes to be in St. Louis by the 18th or 20th of March, but it will be owing to the situation of the river, should the ice above this continue I shall not be able to get my Packs down so soon. . . .

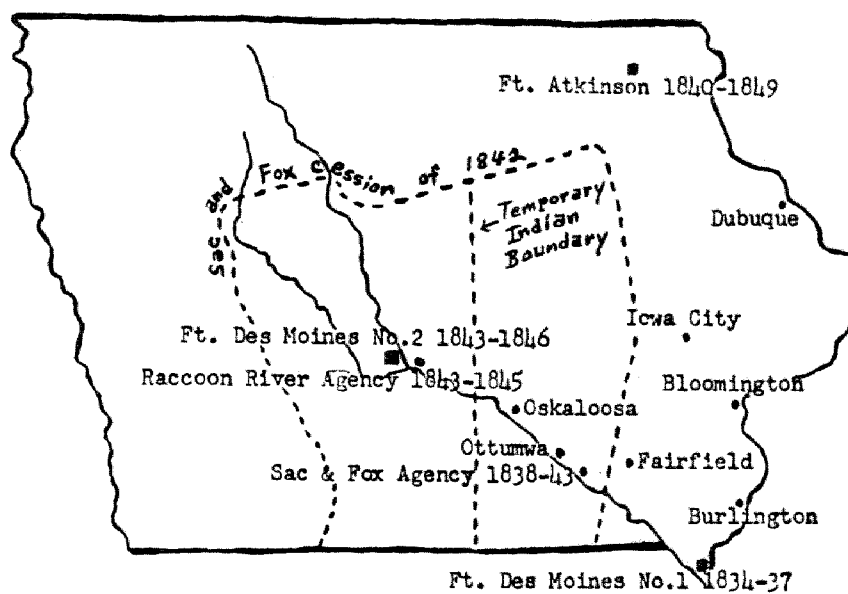


Fig. 3. IOWA TERRITORY

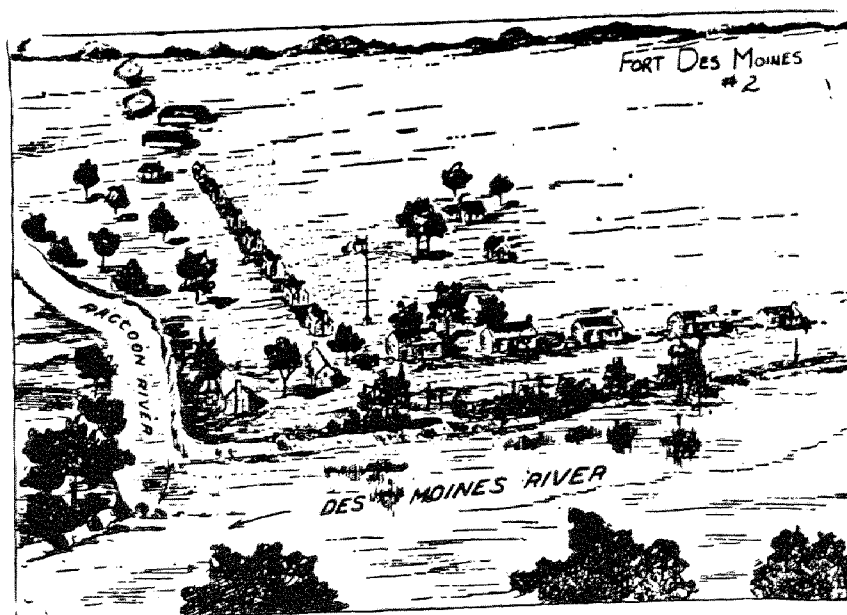


Fig. 4. A fanciful, later-day rendition of Fort Des Moines No. 2, 1843-1846

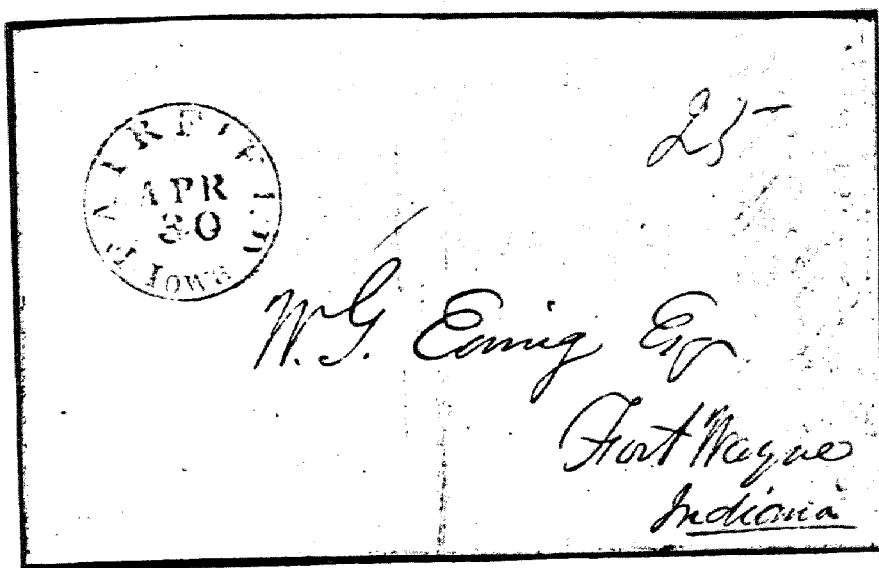


Fig. 5. Fort Des Moines Apr. 26, 1844, by private carrier to Fairfield, Iowa Territory. Indian trader George W. Ewing writes . . . The Indians unanimously agree in full council to pay us \$20,000 next pay . . . The details of our affairs here are troublesome in the extreme . . . yet properly managed we can realize, & draw from them in two years time a cash capital of \$100,000.00—this we cant do among white people . . . The skin business here is a perfect failure & should never be thought of again.

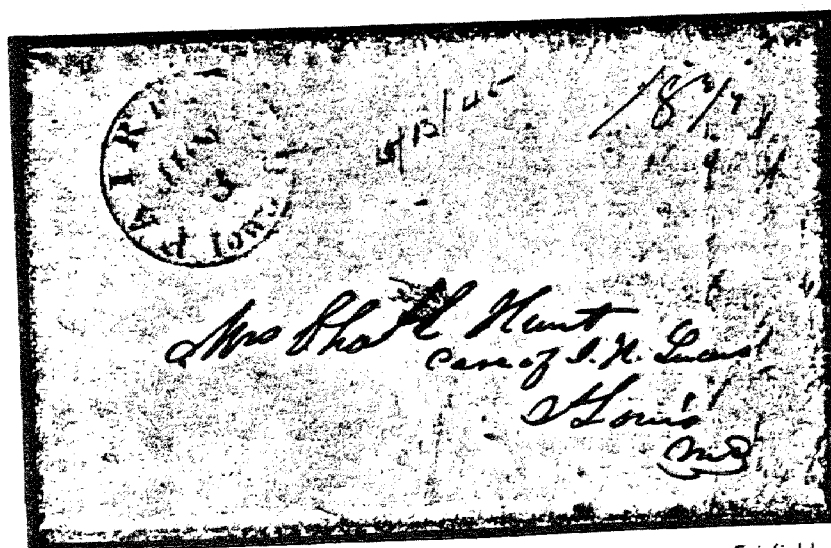


Fig. 6. Fort des Moines I. T. May 28th 1845, by private carrier to Fairfield, Iowa Territory. Charles L. Hunt, a civilian who is preparing to start on an expedition to the north, writes . . . Capt. Allen has just come in and says 'tell the Madam I wont let the Indians kill you' . . . The vicinity of this place is full of Indian traders, hunters, farmers for the Indians & a set of other rascals who always haunt the poor Indians to Rob them.

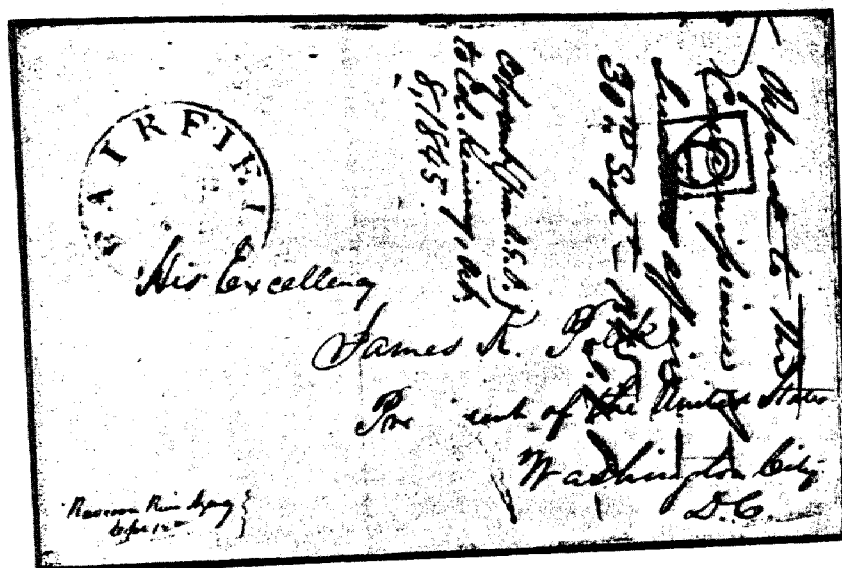


Fig. 7. Fort Des Moines, Iowa September 8th 1845, by private carrier to Fairfield, Iowa Territory. Methodist Minister John Pardoe writes that . . . a large number of Indians were assembled to dance in front of Capt. James Allen's room, when I saw from the same room a large quantity of Spiritous Liquor brought out and distributed among them . . . Ke-o-kuk and a great number of the Indians became very drunk. Capt. James Allen, who governs the place, was present and saw it done.

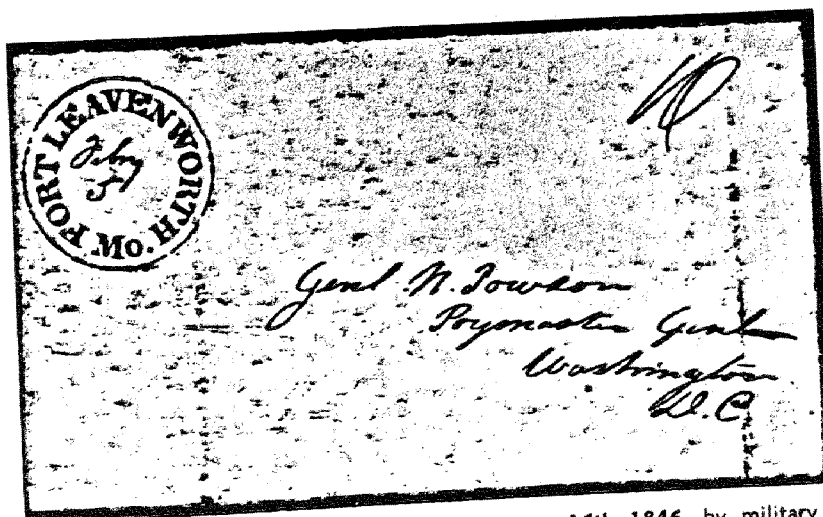


Fig. 8. Fort Des Moines, Iowa Territory, January 16th 1846, by military courier to Fort Leavenworth in the "Missouri Country." Brvt. 2nd Lt. Joseph McElvain of the 1st Dragoons transfers his accounts for Nov. and Dec. 1845, to H. Brick, sutler at Fort Leavenworth.

**GREAT SALE
Of Town Lots in Fort Des
Moines, Polk County, Iowa.**

THE Commissioners of said County, will, on Monday, the 13th day of July next, offer at public outcry to the highest bidder, a great portion of the town and town lots in said town.

Terms of Sale—One sixth cash in hand, the balance in three equal installments: the first in six months, the second in twelve months, and the other in eighteen months.—Bonds will be given to the purchasers for deeds at the last payment.

It is probable that said Commissioners will at the same time and place sell off some of the buildings now in said town.

Done by order of the Board of Commissioners.
J. W. McKAY, Clerk
of the Board of Commissioners.
Fort Des Moines June 1st. 1846-47

Fig. 9. This advertisement announcing the first sale of lots at the town of Fort Des Moines, appeared in the Burlington Hawkeye of June 18, 1846. The buildings mentioned in the last paragraph were the recently vacated garrison quarters of the military post known as Fort Des Moines.

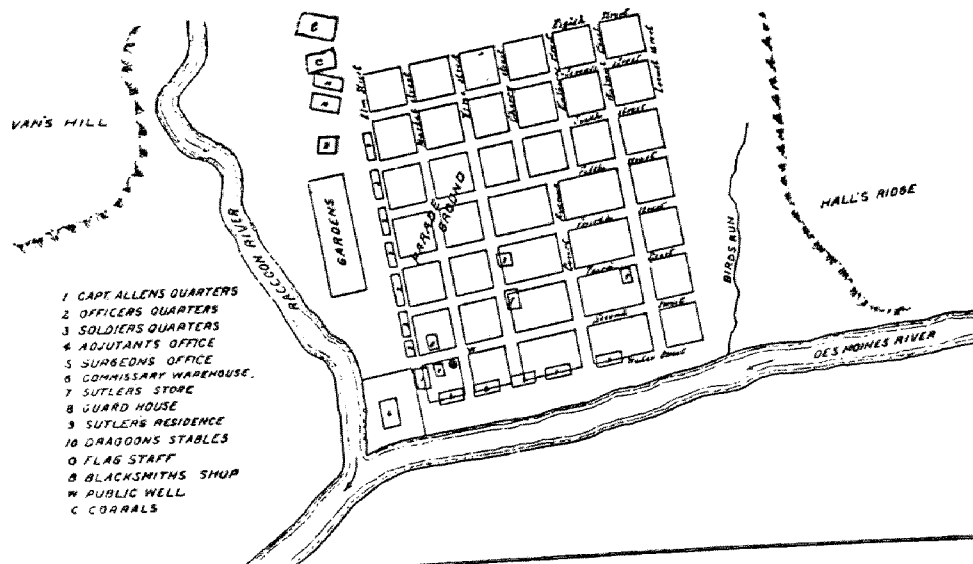


Fig. 10. The original town plat of the town of Fort Des Moines, superimposed on a diagram of the military post of Fort Des Moines.



Fig. 11. Example of the scarce first issue of Polk County treasury warrants showing territorial designation.



Fig. 12. Dr. Thomas K. Brooks, Des Moines' first functioning postmaster.



Fig. 13. Raccoon River Agency house, site of Des Moines' first post office.

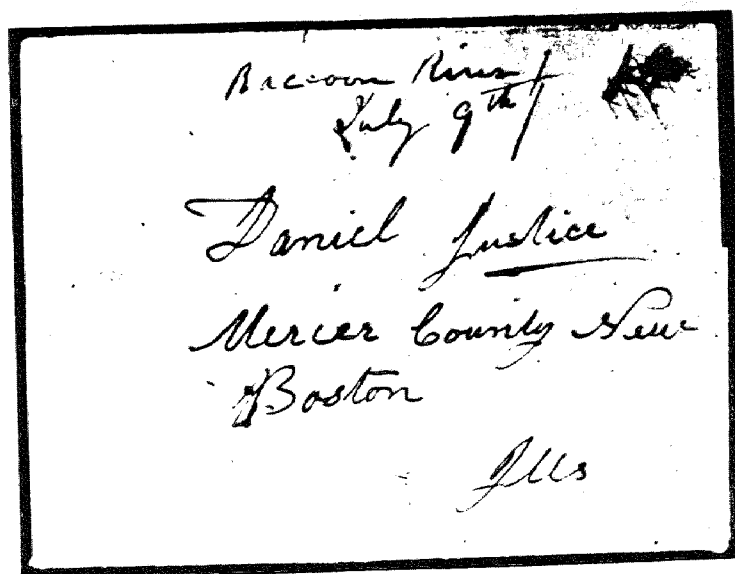


Fig. 14. Raccoon River [Iowa Territory] July 9 [1846], the earliest known Des Moines postmark. Newly-arrived settler Archibald Cooney writes . . . This country is well timbered and plenty of good water. It is useless for me to try to Discribe the country to you by writing[:] it is they finest country you ever saw and if you doe not like it you are far from my way of thinking. But you will not like it until you get up near the forks . . . you must come so we can hunt bees . . . never wait to see the country[:] you are bound to like it or you have altered much . . .

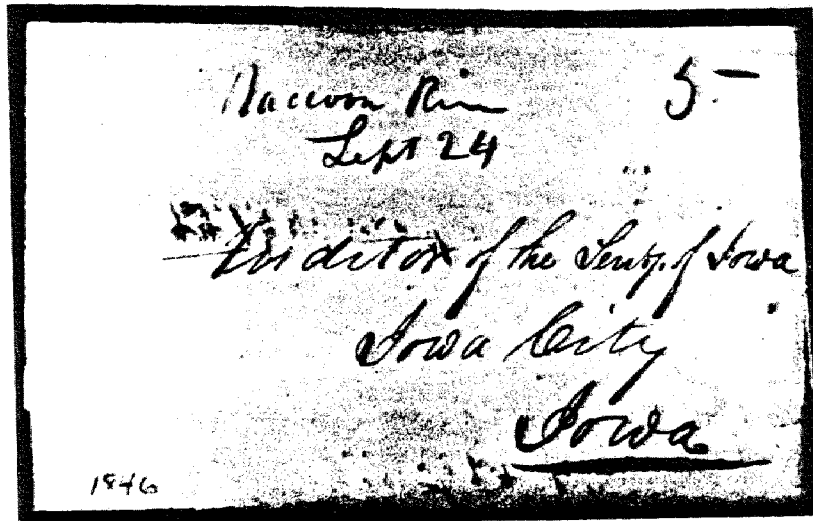


Fig. 15. Raccoon River [Iowa Territory] Sept 24 [1846]. A. D. Jones, writing for county clerk Lewis Whitten, informs the territorial auditor that the aggregate value of the taxable property in Polk County for the year 1846 is \$354.09.

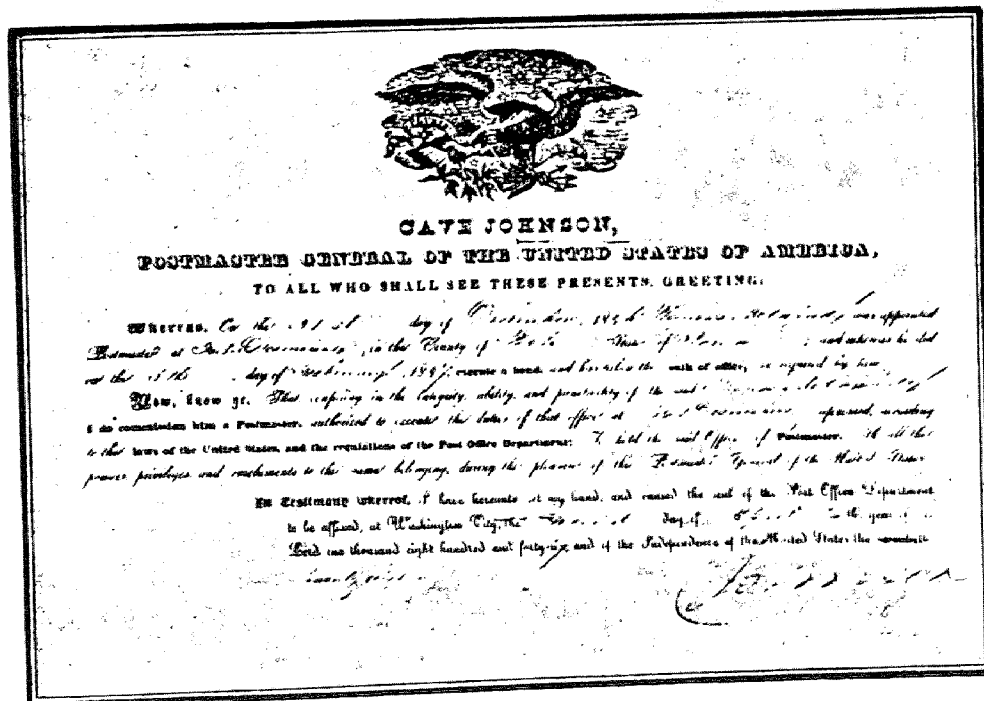


Fig. 16. Postmaster's commission issued to Phineas M. Casady April 2, 1847, two months after he executed his bond, and three months after his initial appointment.



Fig. 17. Phineas M. Casady, Des Moines' third postmaster who, according to official records, served from December 31, 1846, to October 25, 1848. Time lag in the assumption and relinquishment of duties probably makes February 1847, to Jan. 1849 more accurate dates. This ambiguous situation probably attended the term of office of most of the early postmasters.

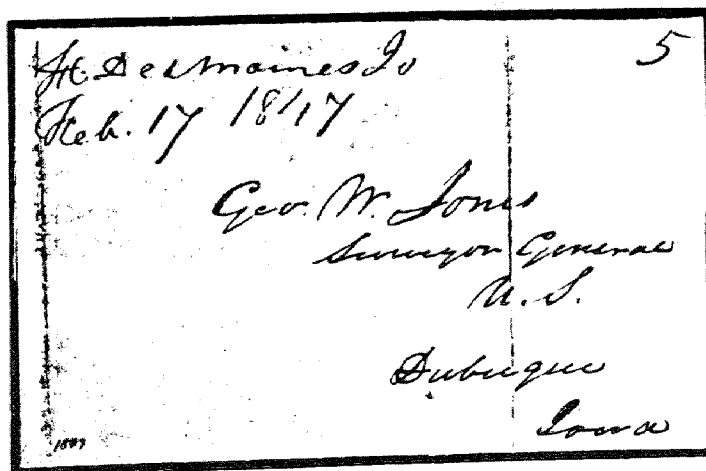


Fig. 18. Ft. Des Moines Ia. Feb. 17, 1847, not only the earliest known Fort Des Moines postmark, but a first trip cover, having left with the first outbound mail! In the enclosed letter surveyor Uriah Biggs writes **The country embraced in my Survey is well adapted to agricultural improvement - being Superior Soil - well watered and beautifully diversified with timber and prairie.**

Fort des Moines, Ia. 10
 July 29
 Hon. Joseph L. Shales
 Auditor of the State
 of Iowa
 Iowa City
 Iowa

Fig. 19. Fort Des Moines, Ia. July 29 [1847]. County clerk Lewis Whitten reports that the aggregate value of taxable property in Polk County for the year 1847 is \$51,488.00.

^{Survey}
 Fort des Moines Ia. Official business
 Oct 13 5
 Hon. Seal L. Jones
 Governor General
 Wisconsin & Lower
 DuBois
 Iowa

Fig. 20. Fort Des Moines Ia Oct. 13 [1847]. In the enclosed letter headed "In Camp on Raccoon River," surveyor Samuel W. Durham writes This is a pretty good country and is fast filling up with Settlers, they appear very civil and obliging and are greatly pleased to See the lands under progress of Surveying.

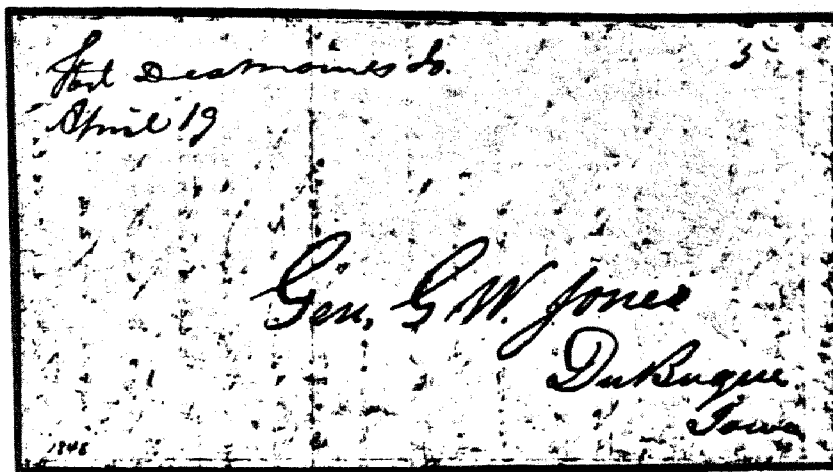


Fig. 21. Fort Des Moines Ia. April 19 [1848]. John H. Anderson writes I am now at the Raccoon Forks of Des Moines, & have been duly installed a citizen of "The Republic." And I must say that if I could hear any news I would be tolerably well pleased with my situation and prospect of business. But we only get one Mail a week & thus far I have received no news by it. During the period 1847-1849 the citizens of Fort Des Moines were in the habit of referring, with mock Texan arrogance, to their isolated portion of the state as the "Upper Des Moines Republic."



Fig. 22. Robert L. Tidrick, fourth Des Moines postmaster who served from October 26, 1848, to June 25, 1849.

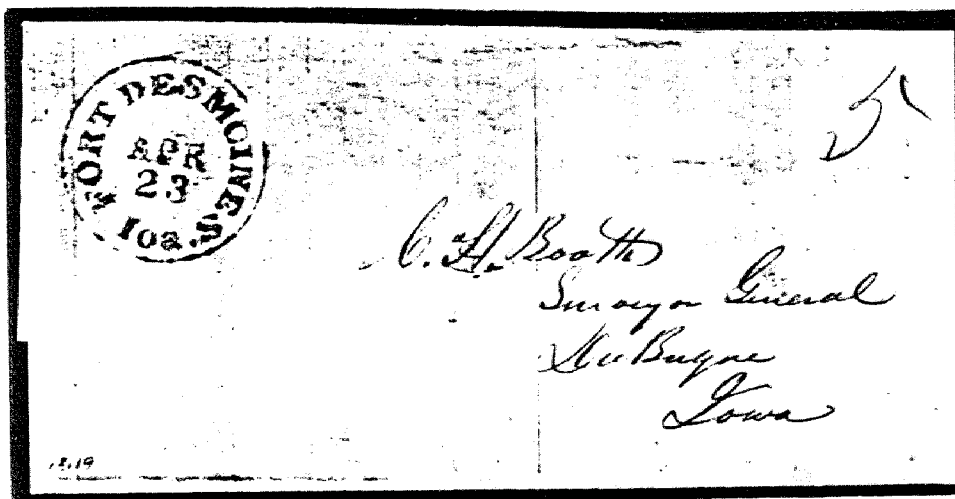


Fig. 23. FORT DES MOINES Ia. APR 23 [1849], the earliest known use of the Type 1 postmark. The lined, blue writing paper mutes the intensity of the red marking. In the enclosed letter surveyor John A. Pitzer reports that *in consequence of Rain and high water I shall be unable to complete my contract by the 20 of May.*



Fig. 24. Hoyt Sherman, fifth postmaster and brother of General William Tecumseh Sherman, served June 26, 1849 to February 10, 1853.

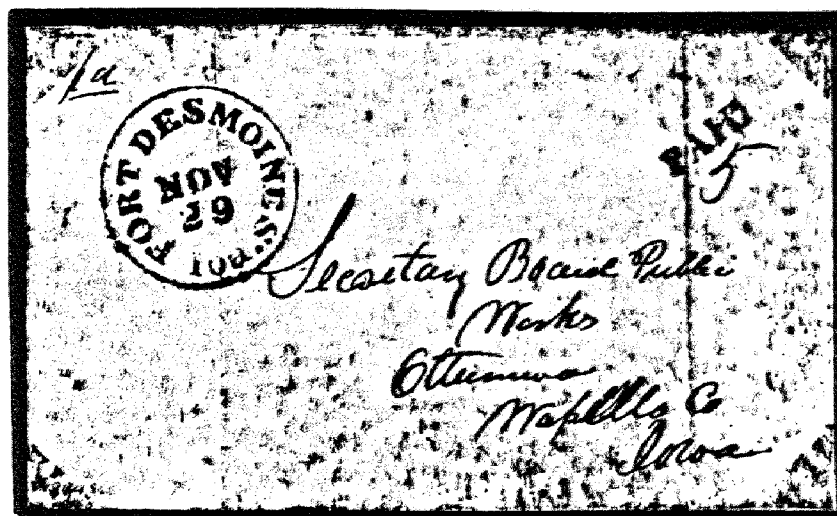


Fig. 25. FORT DES MOINES Ia. NOV 29 [1849], Type 1. Iowa Star editor Barlow Granger writes . . . [I] Have been driven with work of late, but will [not] stop even if the "Star" stops—which however will not be the case. It is doing tolerably well.

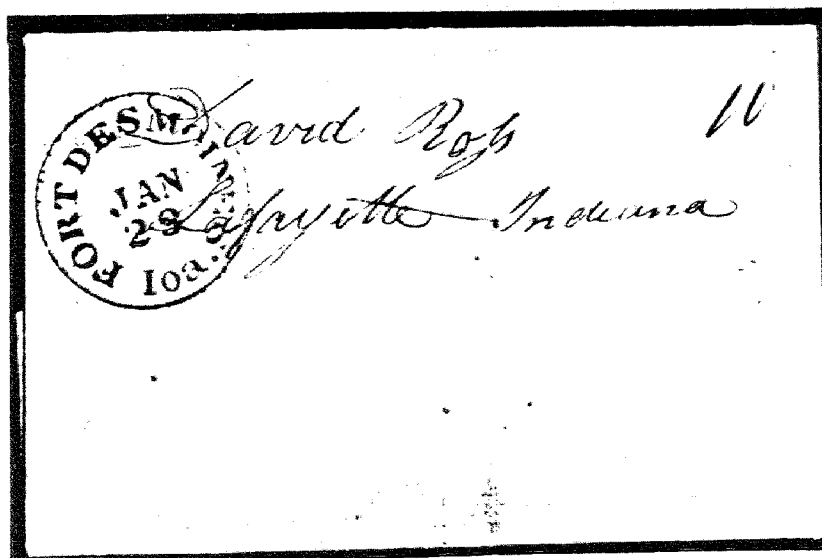


Fig. 26. FORT DES MOINES Ia. JAN 29 [1850], Type 1. Andrew Yount writes his friend that Fort Des Moines is a town the[y] say contains 600 souls yet it dont look much like a town it is built very Scatering on a large Space and I suppose would have been much larger if lumber could have been procured as there are but five Mills in operation here yet goods are sold high . . .

**ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE OF
MAILS TO AND FROM FORT DES
MOINES.**

EAST, via Oskaloosa, arrives every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, at 8 P. M., and departs Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 5 A. M. Closes at 7 P. M.

EAST, via Iowa City, arrives every Wednesday and Saturday at 6 p. m., and departs every Monday and Thursday at 7 a. m. Closes on Wednesday and Sunday at 8 p. m.

SOUTH-EAST via Knoxville and Albia arrives every Saturday at 6 p. m. and departs every Monday at 8 a. m. Closes Sunday at 8 p. m.

SOUTH via Lancaster, Mo., arrives every Saturday at 6 p. m. and departs every Monday at 8 a. m. Closes Sunday evening at 8.

WEST to Council Bluffs, arrives every Sunday at 6 p. m., and departs Monday at 8 a. m.

WEST to Penoach, arrives every Friday at 11 a. m. and departs same day at 2 p. m. Closes at 1 the same day.

SOUTH-WEST to Winterset (Madison co.) arrives every Friday at 11 a. m., and departs same day at 2 p. m. Closes at 1 the same day.

To CARLETON, (Polk co.) arrives every Saturday at 12 m. and departs same day at 2 p. m.

Office open every day (except Sunday) from 8 o'clock a. m. to 8 p. m.

H. SHERMAN, P. M.

Fig. 27. Fort Des Moines mail routes published in the Iowa Star September 21, 1849.

| List of Letters | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| R EMAINING in the Post Office at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, on the 30th September, 1849, which if not taken out before the 1st day of January next, will be sent to the General Post Office as Dead Letters. | | | |
| A Aubrey Milton B Bland John T. Baker Adam Barry Miss Martha Bush David Black Martin Butler Wm Budden James Brown Wm Baker Charles Early Nicholas Black Alexander Butler Thomas Byers Abner Bradford Wm Bull Jacob T. Bull Thomas T. Burkhead John S. Barnes Vincent C Clark Jacob Chitwood Pleasant Concha Jacob Childers Abraham Cummins David D. Cartwright William Childers David Carwright Wm Crow Arch'd Connor Peter Clark Simon Cowley Matthew D Detrick Phillip R. Denison George Daniels Aaron Dobbins John E Eaton Elijah Evans Samuel | | | |
| F Fox Phillip P. Fremont Adeline L. Flower John Fisher Samuel B. G Gilbert Samuel Galloway James Galt John Z. Graves Joel Goodenough Chas. W. Grogan John H Howerton John Haskin Thomas Huges Henry Hanna Wm H. Hobson Wm Hall Allen Hamilton Samuel P. Hollingsworth Jane Huff John S. Hawley James Herbert Ezekiel Hynds Thomas Harris Abraham Hanson John Haworth George Howe Geo W. Horrod James J. Hitts Benj A. Higby Tyler I Isaacs David J Jordan Jacob Jordan Harrison Johnston J D. Johns Aaron L. K Jones John Jones John W. | | | |
| K Krysher George Koeler Edward L Lewis Jonathan Lison John Landon Mrs Ruth M Meeker Jacob Miles James Marr Samuel Minter Jacob Martin Reuben Mogan Isaac McGraw Wm S. N Nicholson Peter Nely John E. O Owen John W. P Peter Sarah Peter Reason Pomer Samuel Parkinson John R. Porter Phillip Plunkley Orson Pratt Mrs Lucinda Preuty Richard L. Q Quinn Wm R Rose Robert Reiner Jane Reaves N. Richards Wm M. Redfern John Repp Pleasant F. | | | |
| S Spaulding Daniel Sammons J S. Surt John Sims James Scovill Miss Cordelia Schouten Andrew Smith John Sorbet Wm Pison Wm Swene David S. Smith G W. Stewart Wm Sawyer Wm T Tarnbull Nathan Taylor Boston Tharp Josiah Thompson Samuel V Vinton Samuel Veatch Isaac G. Vandora Mrs Mary A. Vandora William W Wilson George H. Wicker Tally Wherry James Wilson James Watts Maria White James Wallace Charles Wiley Holliday Webb Nathan Wood Daniel Walsh Wm Wright Charles Wright John Wheeler Henry Y Young Valdemar | | | |

Fig. 28. First list of advertised mail at Fort Des Moines, published in Iowa Star of October 12, 1849. Many of the letters were probably addressed to emigrants who had already passed through town on their way to California.

Fig. 29. First building in Des Moines erected for exclusive service as a post office. It was built by Hoyt Sherman in 1850.

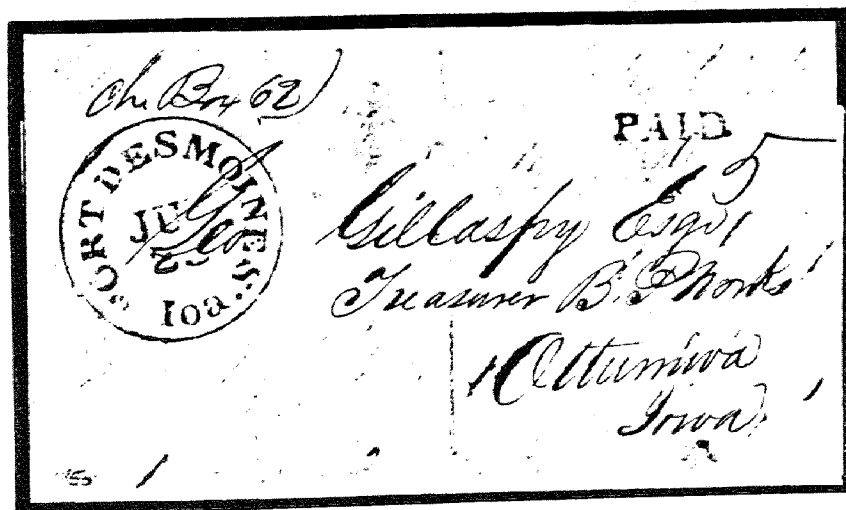


Fig. 30. FORT DES MOINES IOWA. JUL 23 [1850], Type 1. Former postmaster Robert L. Tidrick says *Politics has arrived at a lively interest here . . . Whigs talk of Democrats voting Whig ticket, it's all in the crye . . . We have Democrats enough.*

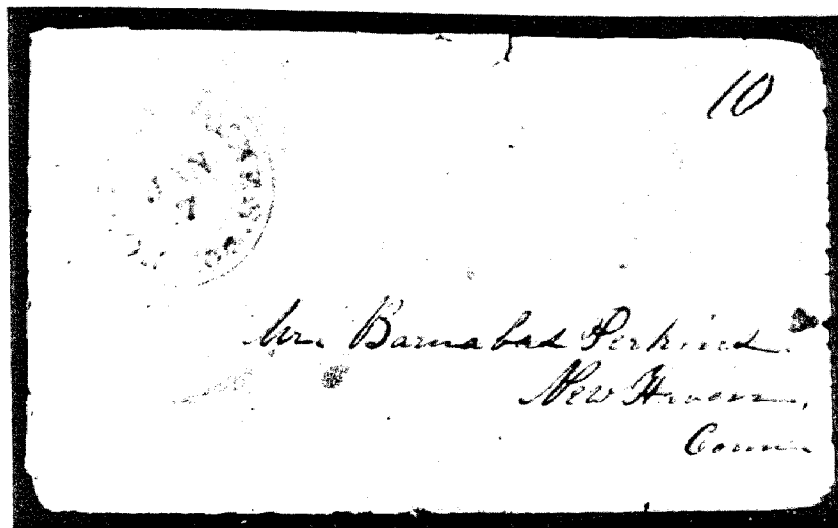


Fig. 31. FORT DES MOINES Ia. JAN 7 [1851], Type 1. School teacher Arozina Perkins writes her brother that at Fort Des Moines We have some of the most sweeping blasts . . . that you ever felt. The winds come all the way from the Rocky Mountains . . . there is nothing to break them . . . I cannot tell you how many dwellings there are, for I have not counted them; some are of log, some of brick, some framed, and some are the remains of the old dragoon houses . . . Society is as various as the buildings are. There are people from nearly every state, and Dutch, Swedes, &c.

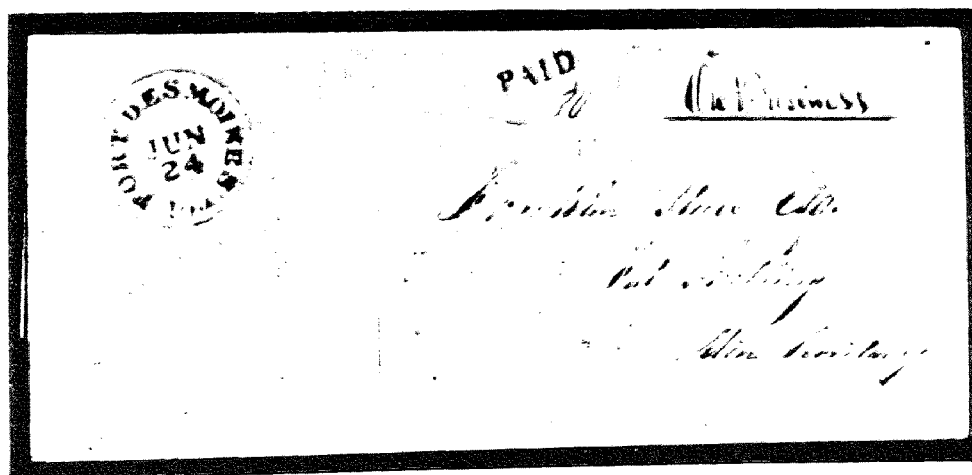


Fig. 32. FORT DES MOINES Ia. JUN 24 [circa 1849-51], Type 1. This triple rate to the sutler at Fort Snelling is the largest known rate of postage used out of Fort Des Moines.

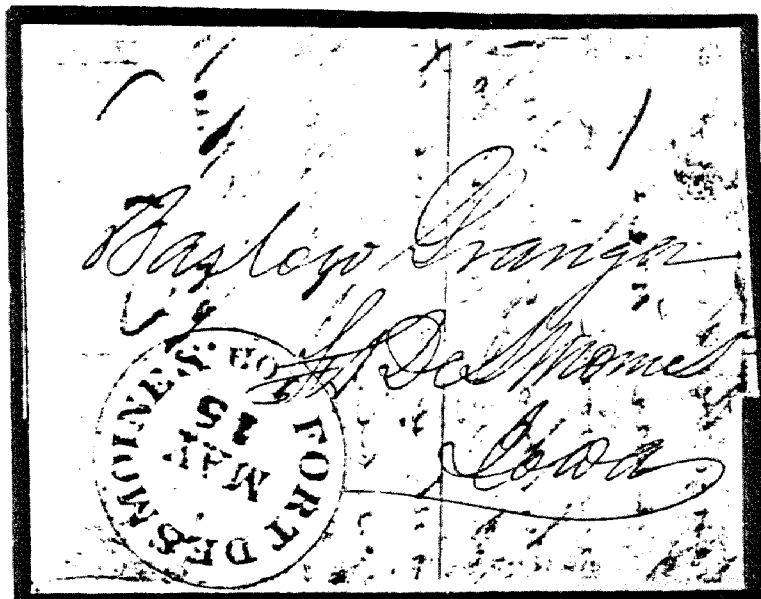


Fig. 33. **FORT DES MOINES** Ioa. **MAY 15** [1852], Type 1. The smallest postage rate known used at Fort Des Moines is the 1c drop letter rate on this cover originating at Winterset, Iowa.

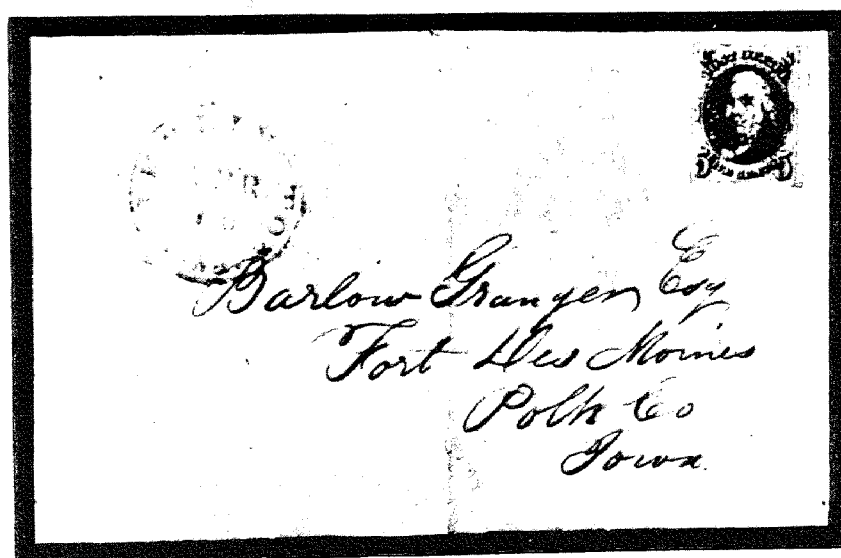


Fig. 34. 5c 1847 (#1) used from **BURLINGTON** Iowa. **APR 16** [1851]. The stamp is lightly tied on the left by the cluster of red dots used as the killer. This cover represents one of only eight known uses of the 1847 issue from Iowa, and is the only 1847-issue cover known used to Fort Des Moines.

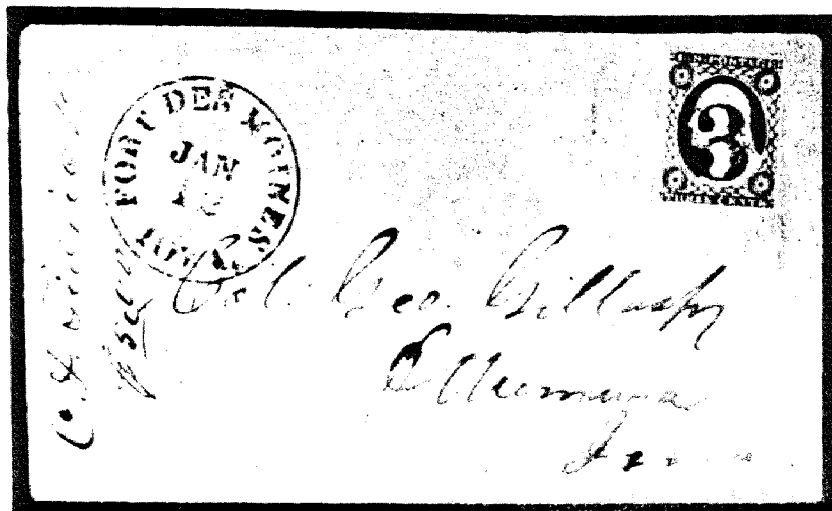


Fig. 35. FORT DES MOINES IOWA. JAN 12 [1853], Type 2, with 3c 1851 (#11). This is not only a beautiful example of the pre-cancelled (?) "3," but the earliest known use of the 1851 issue from Des Moines, and the earliest known use of the Type 2 postmark.

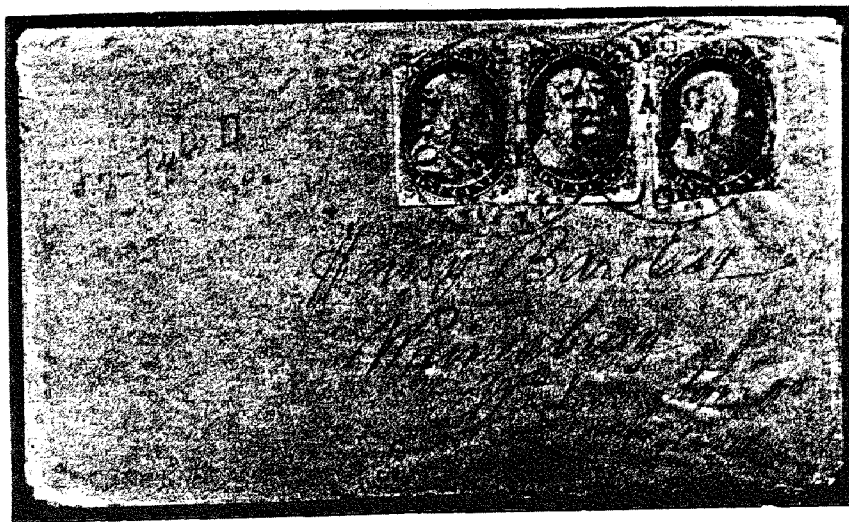


Fig. 36. FORT DES MOINES IOWA. AUG 21 [circa 1853-56], Type 2, with a pair and one single of the 1c 1851 (#7). This is one of only two 1c 1851 issue covers known from Fort Des Moines.

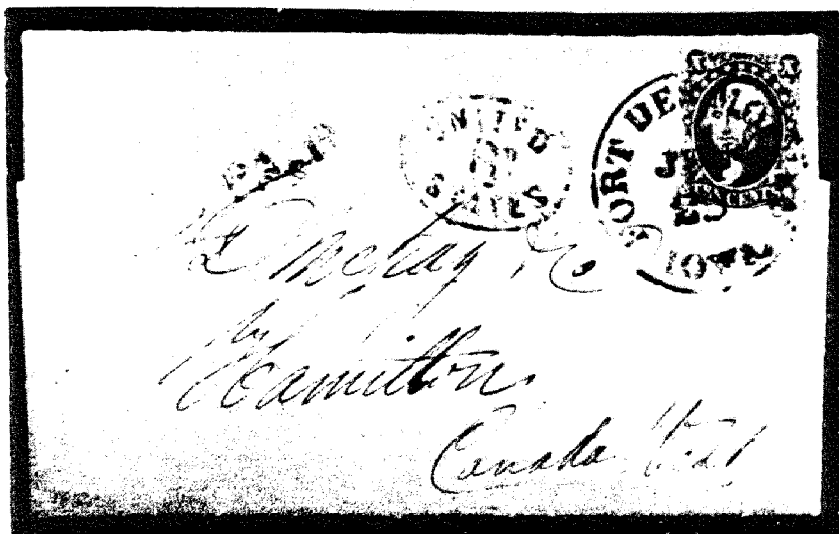


Fig. 37. FORT DES MOINES IOWA. JUN 23 [1856], Type 2, with 10c 1855 (#14) paying postage to Canada. Canadian backstamps indicate the letter was received July 28, 1856. In the enclosed letter Canadian emigrant John Heines writes I am now liveing in loway . . . this is a good country and if I only could get a citation I can by good land for two or three dollars per acre and in a few years it will be worth 20 or 30\$ per acre.



Fig. 38. Wesley Redhead, sixth postmaster, served from February 11, 1853 to May 5, 1861.

Fig. 39. Sherman's Block, which housed the post office from November 1856 to January 1, 1866.

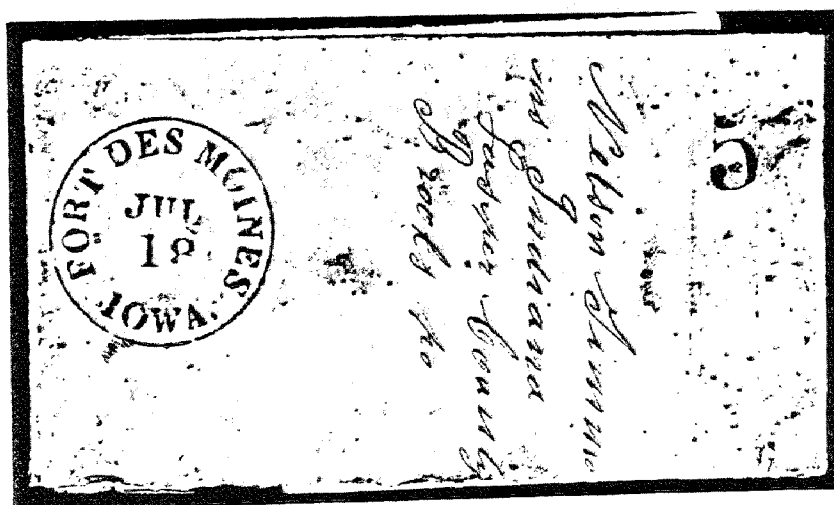
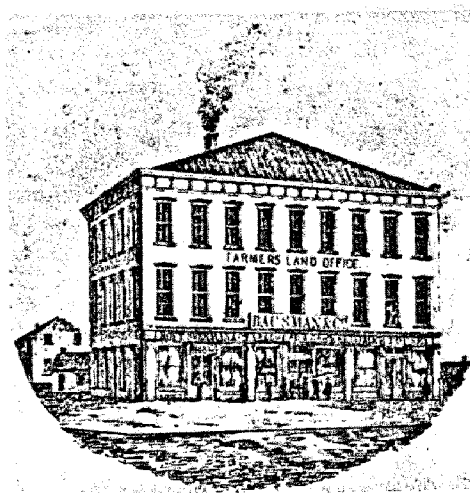


Fig 40. FORT DES MOINES IOWA, JUL. 18 [1853], Type 2. Robert Edmonson, a farmer, writes we like the Cuntra well and i am well Satisfide and i wouldent live bac thair if i had one of you[r] farms . . . ther has bin Steem-boots aplenty her to Stock the town [Fort Des Moines] with goods.

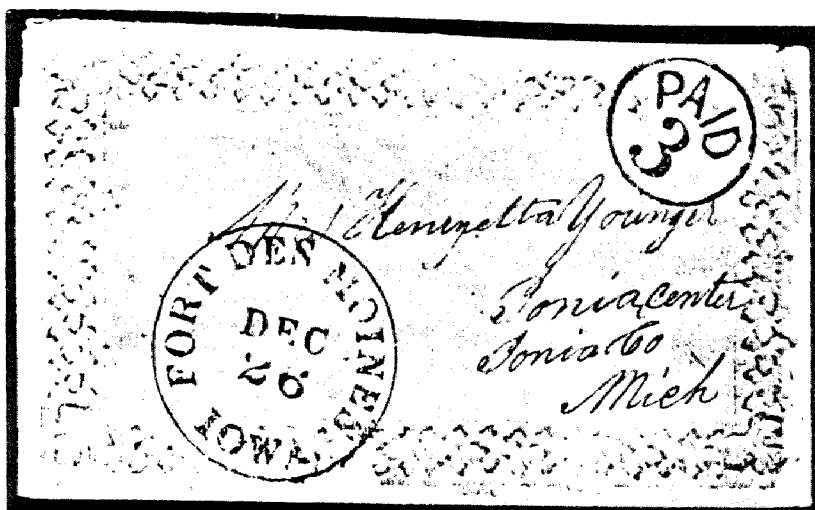


Fig. 41. FORT DES MOINES IOWA. DEC.26 [circa 1853-55], Type 2, on small, embossed ladies' envelope.

WESLEY REDHEAD.

CHARLES O. DAWSON

REDHEAD & DAWSON.

Wholesale and Retail Dealers in

Books, Stationery, Paper Hangings,

AND

FANCY GOODS,

AT THE POST OFFICE,

NO. 2 Sherman's Block,

Des Moines, Iowa.

Have constantly on hand a general assortment of

School, Miscellaneous, and

STANDARD BOOKS,

Blank work, Note, Letter, and Cap Paper, Envelopes,

Inks, Drawing, and Engrossing materials, Legal

Forms, Gold Pens and Cases, Gold and Silver

Pencils, Steel Pens, Fancy Cutlery,

Perfumery, Porte Monnaies, Pearl

and Ivory Card Cases,

Wall and Window

Paper, &c.

The latest Publications and Magazines

RECEIVED BY EXPRESS.

R. & D. pledge themselves, to sell as "Cheap for Cash," as any other house in the West. Having made favorable arrangements at the East, they are prepared to fill all orders at the shortest notice, and upon the most reasonable terms. (137)

Fig. 42. Redhead & Dawson ad appearing in H. B. Tur-
rill's *Historical Reminiscences of the City of Des Moines*,
published by Redhead & Dawson in the summer of 1857.

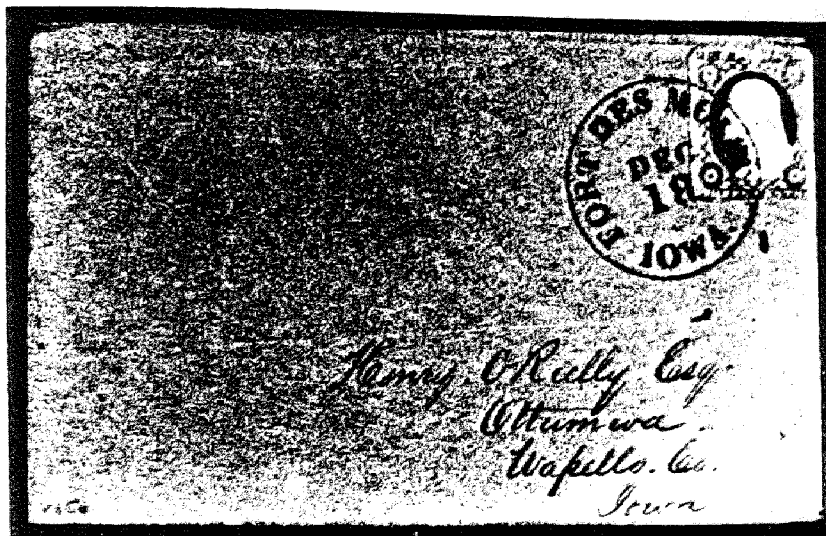


Fig. 43. FORT DES MOINES IOWA. DEC. 18 [1854], Type 2 with 3c 1851 (No. 11). Henry B. O'Reilly, a visitor, writes: Eight of us went out hunting with Dr. Farner day before yesterday and between four of us we killed a deer . . . There is a man over in town has one of Sharps Rifles which he will sell for \$35 . . . I think it is much better than any of the Rifles I have tried before.

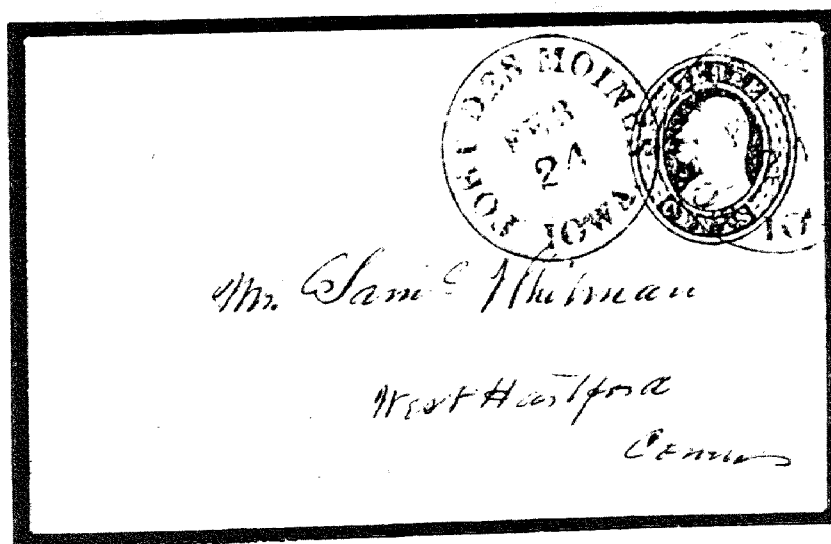


Fig. 44. FORT DES MOINES IOWA. FEB 24 [circa 1854-56], Type 2, on 3c red on white entire (No. U3).

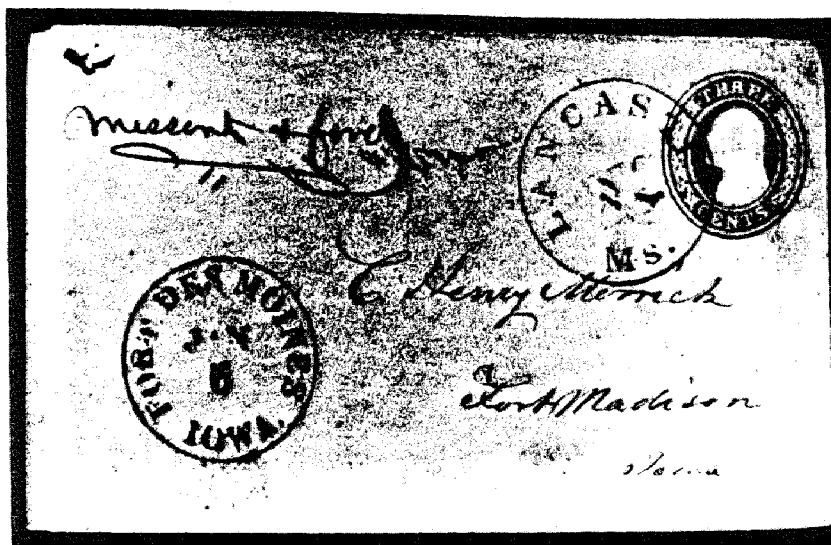


Fig. 45. FORT DES MOINES IOWA. JAN 5 [circa 1855-56], Type 2, used as a forwarding marking on 3c red on buff entire (No. U10). Postal employees often confused Fort Madison with Fort Des Moines.

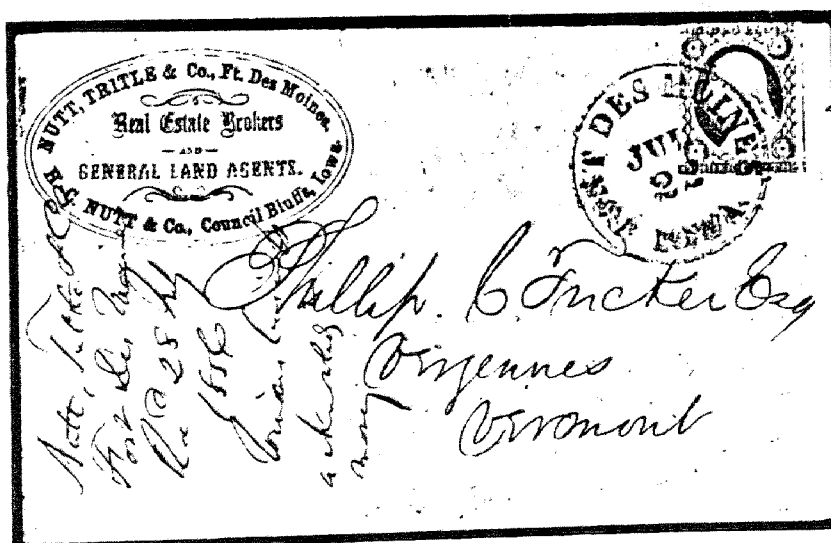


Fig. 46. FORT DES MOINES IOWA. JUL 22 [1856], Type 2, with 3c 1851 (No. 11). The envelope bears the earliest known corner card used in Des Moines.



Fig. 47. FORT DES MOINES IOWA. NOV 3 [1856], earliest known use of Type 2 in blue, with 3c 1851 (No. 11). A strong light reveals that the printed name crossed out on this early corner card was that of **B.F. Allen**, the community's prominent merchant-banker.

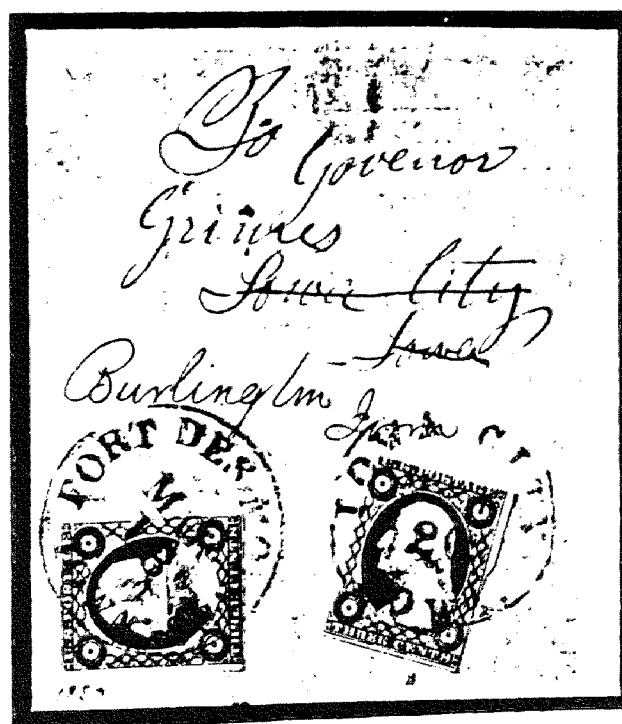


Fig. 48. FORT DES MOINES IOWA. MAR 18 [1857] in blue, the latest known use of Type 2, with 3c 1851 (No. 11). Another No. 11 was affixed at Iowa City to forward the letter to Burlington.



Fig. 49. Des Moines illustrated stationery sold by Postmaster Redhead at his post office book store in 1857. The view, looking west from capitol hill, was drawn by local artist W.R. Wheeler, and was also used as a frontispiece in Turrill's **Historical Reminiscences**. Another view, a 28 inch by 40 inch west-to-east view of Des Moines by Wheeler, was lithographed by Hoffman & Knickerbocker of Albany, N.Y. On March 21, 1857, the **Journal** reported that a proof impression of this huge print was on display at the post office.



Fig. 50. FORT DES MOINES Iowa, JUL 1 1857, the latest known use of Type 3, with three singles of the 1c 1852 (No. 9) on neat buff envelope to Marietta, Iowa. In 1956 this cover sold as lot No. 310 of H.R. Harmer's second sale of the Alfred H. Caspary collection.

Fig. 51. . . . DES MOINES Iowa. SEP
10 1857, the only known example
of Type 4, used with the 3c 1857
(No. 25) on a small piece.

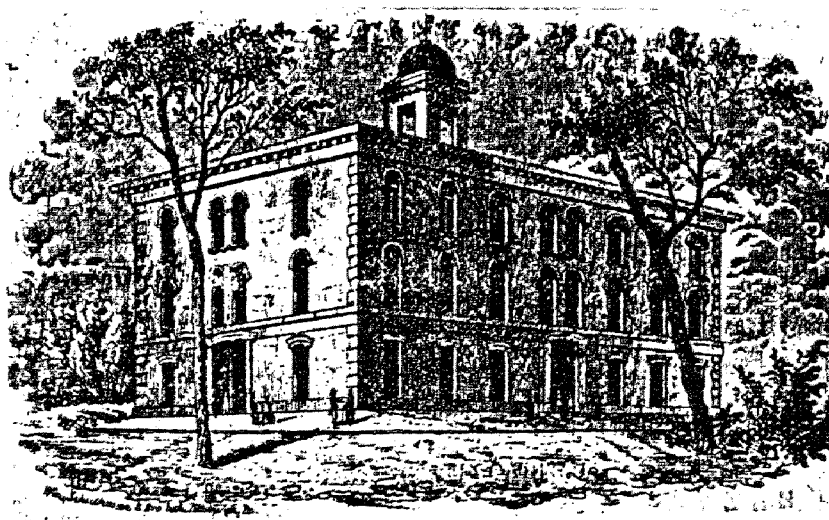
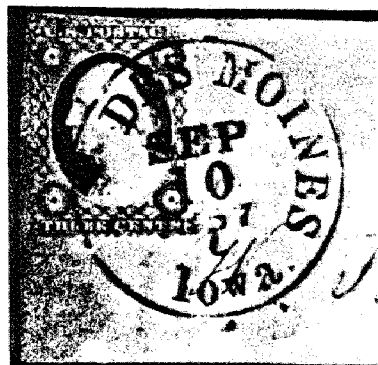


Fig. 52. The first capitol building in Des Moines, built 1856-57 by Messrs.
Bryant & Hyde. It was a 150x56 foot brick building in Ionic style.

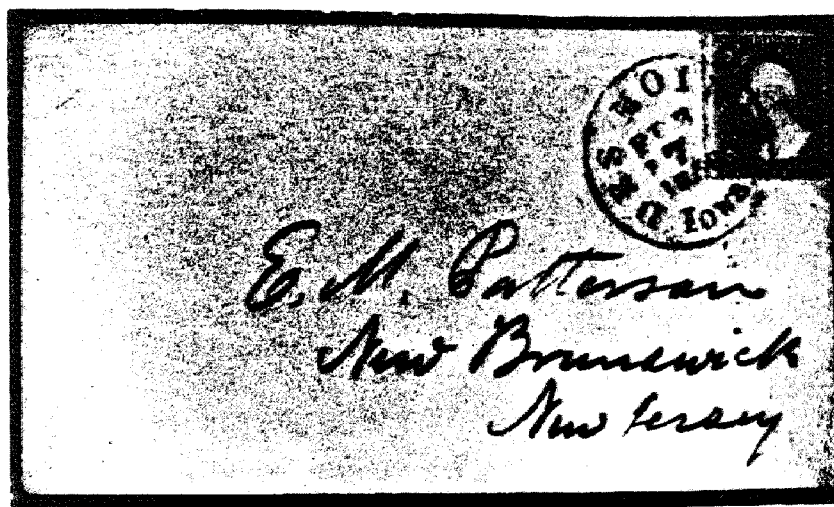


Fig. 53. DES MOINES Iowa, FEB 7 1858, the earliest known use of Type 5, with 3c 1857 (No. 26).



Fig. 54. Another example of Des Moines illustrated stationery sold by Postmaster Redhead in the late 1850s is this east-to-west vista based on an 1858 photographic view by G. L. Reynolds. The junction of the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers can be seen at the extreme left. A large lithograph of this same view was done by Middleton, Strobridge & Co. of Cincinnati, Ohio.

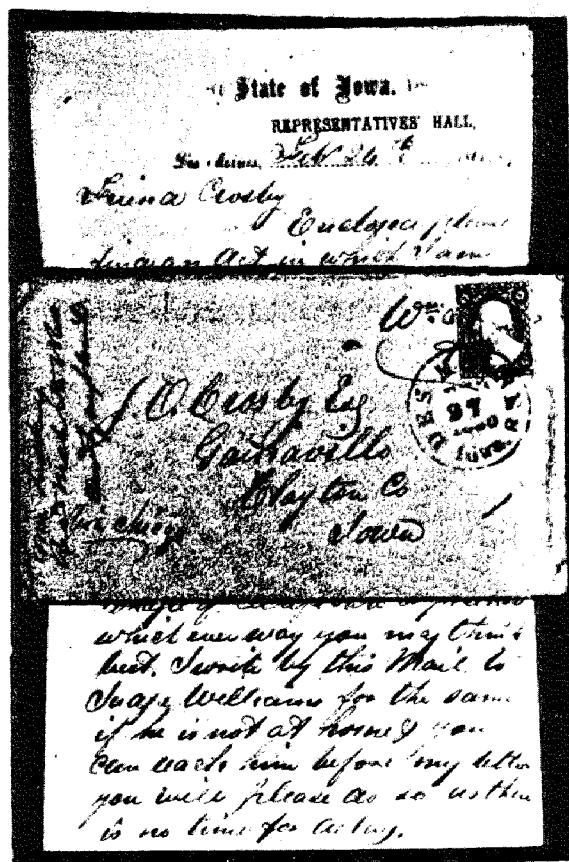


Fig. 55. EAST DES MOINES SEPT [11 1859?], one of two known examples of the mysterious Type 6 postmark, with 3c 1857 (No. 26).



Fig. 56. DES MOINES Iowa. AUG 5 1859, Type 5 used with 3c 1857 (No. 26) on advertisement cover manufactured by Mills & Co. of Des Moines. In the summer of 1859 the American House was advertising that "No pains will be spared to render the stay of guests at this House pleasant and agreeable."

Fig. 57. DES MOINES Iowa FEB 27 1860, Type 5 used with 3c 1857 (No. 26). In enclosed letter on statehouse stationery Representative William Tucker says It is somewhat doubtful about the new code passing. Lawyers are afraid of it; they don't want justice as plain and easy.



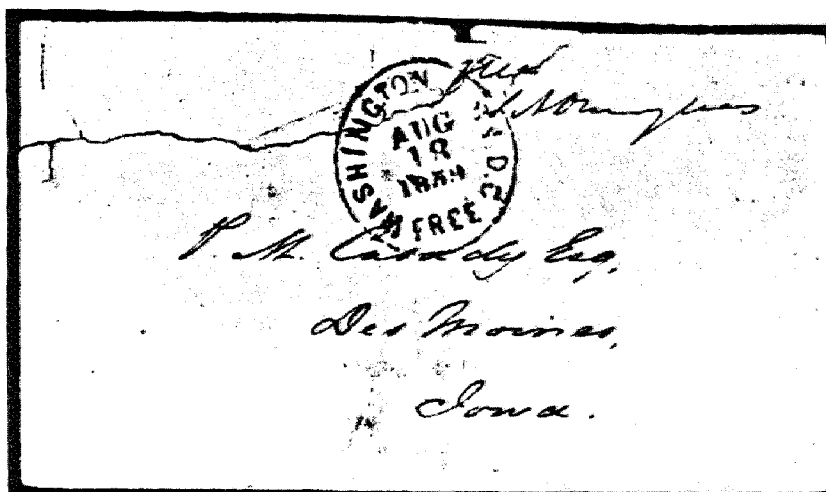


Fig. 58. Stephen A. Douglas free frank on cover bearing black WASHINGTON CITY, D.C./FREE/AUG 18 1859. In the enclosed letter to former Des Moines postmaster P.M. Casady, the "Little Giant" explains that family health problems force him to decline an Iowa Democratic Central Committee invitation to visit Iowa and address political meetings. He states, however, that **The Democracy of Iowa stand faithfully by the principle of popular sovereignty, and their candidates, so far as I know them, are worthy of all confidence.**



Fig. 59. Free frank of Iowa senator George W. Jones on cover postmarked DUBUQUE Iowa/FREE/SEP 25 1858. Jones writes that Crocker's recommendation for postmaster at Adair, Iowa, is accepted, and expresses dissatisfaction with the weak stand taken by the Iowa Democratic Party. **As we now stand a victory will be no triumph at all, altho' it will be glorious to see Black Republicanism checked even by milk & water democrats such as I consider the Douglass ante Lecomptonites to be.** In opposition to the General Assembly of Iowa Jones took President Buchanan's pro-Southern stance on the admission of Kansas, and as a result was removed from office in 1859. In 1861 Jones' two sons joined the Confederate Army, and Jones was imprisoned for making treasonable statements in letters to his old friend Jefferson Davis. Marcellus M. Crocker, the recipient of this letter, later became a famous federal general—one of Gen. Grant's favorite division commanders.

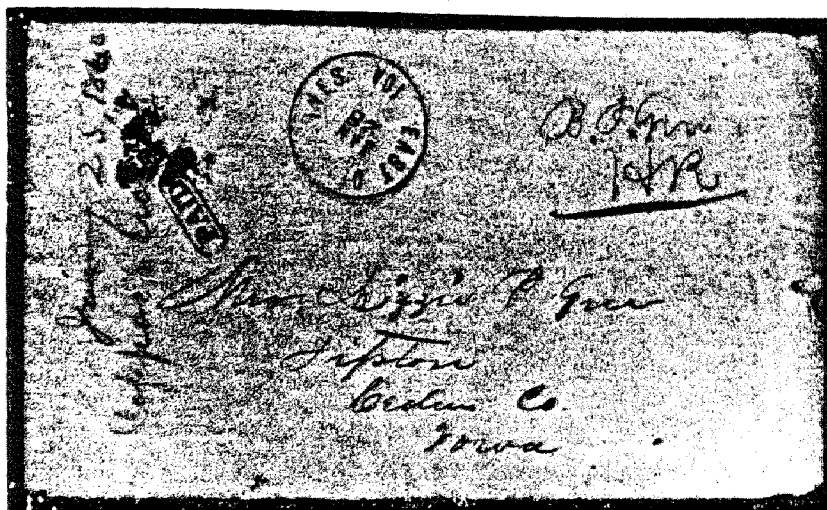


Fig. 60. EAST DES MOINES/IOA/JAN 28 [1860], the only known example of Type 7, on a cover bearing the identification signature of state representative Benjamin F. Gue. Although state officials did not have the franking privilege they commonly signed their covers in an effort to expedite the handling of their mail. In his letter of January 25, 1860, Gue describes a supper given by Senator Harlan, and then tells his wife of the great excitement occasioned by the appearance of some Virginians with a requisition for the Harper's Ferry fugitive Barclay Coppac. The Governor discovered a flaw in the requisition and refused to give him up until it was corrected. The Virginians immediately started back intending to arrest Coppic [sic] and hold him until they could get the requisition corrected. As soon as we heard of it we raised some money and hired a man to start immediately on the fastest horse that could be found to ride night and day to Springdale to let Coppic [sic] know that they were coming. You will probably hear before this reaches you whether they got him or not.

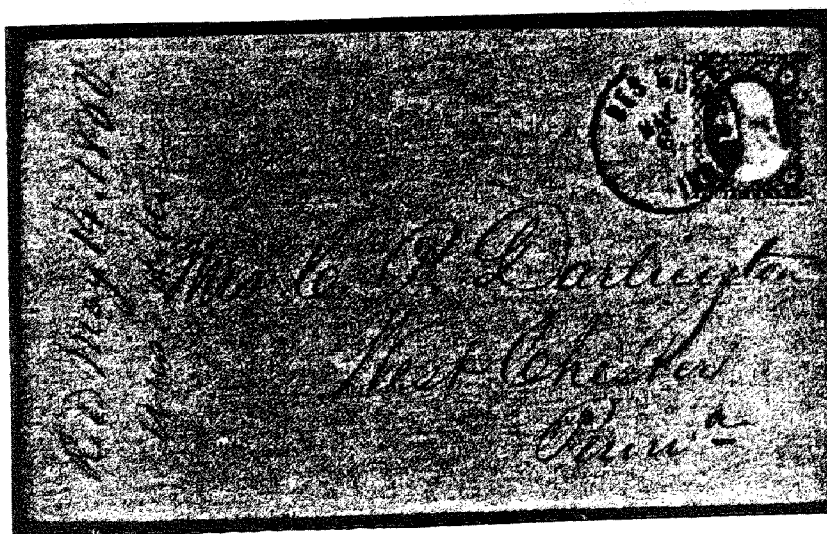


Fig. 61. . . . DES MOINES IOA/MAY 8 [1860], one of only two known examples of Type 8, used with 3c 1857 (#26). Type 8 was created by removing the word EAST in Type 7, and was presumably used in an east-side branch of the Des Moines office created after the closing of the East Des Moines office on February 10, 1860.

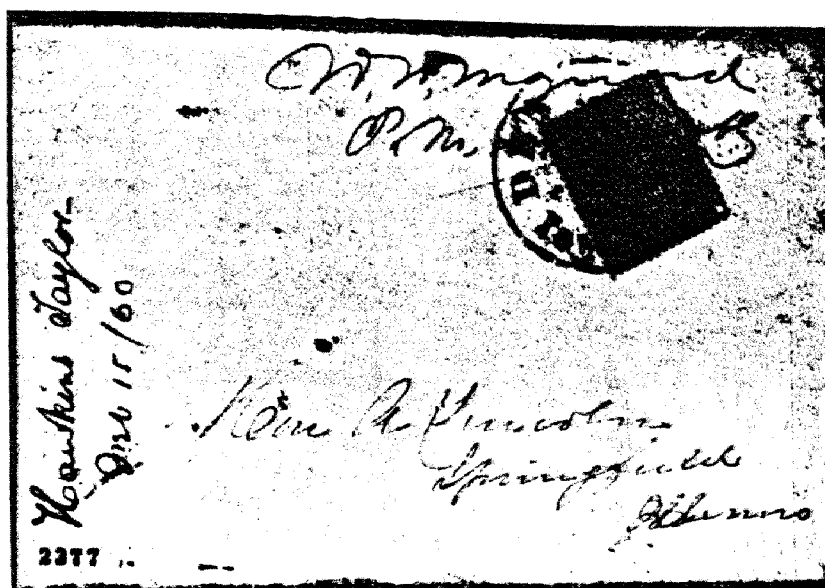


Fig. 62. DES MOINES/Iowa/FEB 17 1860, Type 5 used with 3c 1857 (#26) on cover addressed to Abraham Lincoln. Hawkins Taylor of Keokuk, Iowa, who was in the capital city attending Republican party functions, writes *It would afford Iowa great pleasure to have the chance of casting her electoral vote for you. But as I before said to you the will of it can be known by the Chicago convention. . . The States of Pa [.] New Jersey, Ia & Illinois will no doubt determine the nomination. . .* The writing over the stamp on this cover, and in Fig. 63, appears to read "W.W. Maynard P[ost] M[aster] Gen'l Assembly." Although this looks like a free frank it is actually a directional note written by Taylor to Maynard. Maynard, the acting postmaster of the 8th General Assembly, was paid \$2 a day to deliver mail to the Des Moines post office, arrange for the payment of postage, and bring back mail addressed to members of the legislature.

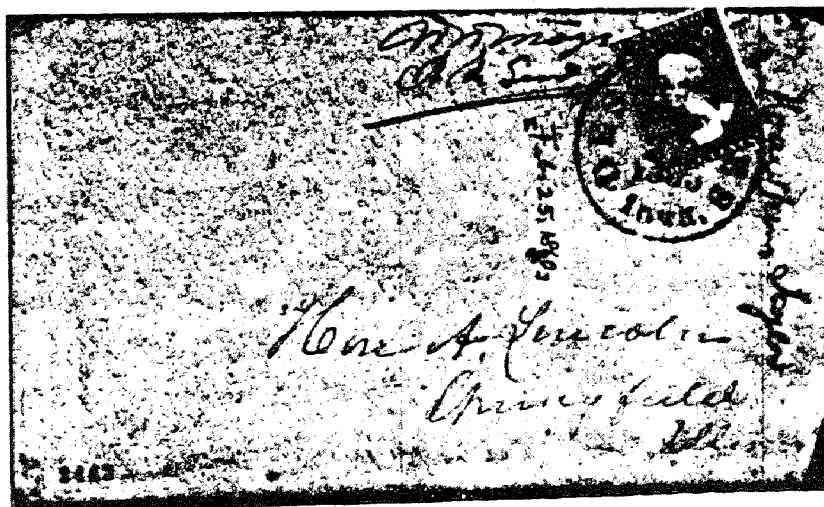


Fig. 63. DES MOINES/Iowa/FEB 26 1860, Type 5 used with 3c 1857 (#26) on cover addressed to Abraham Lincoln. Writing from the senate chamber of the statehouse Hawkins Taylor predicts . . . *Our Delegates I am sure would rather vote for you than any other man in the U.S.[.] especially if the arch Domagogue Douglas should be the nominee of the South. . . Our delegates will be influenced more by Col Warren than any other man in Iowa. . . I go to Chicago as his guest and if there is anything that I can do for you I am ready to do it. All that I want is to know how to serve you. . .*

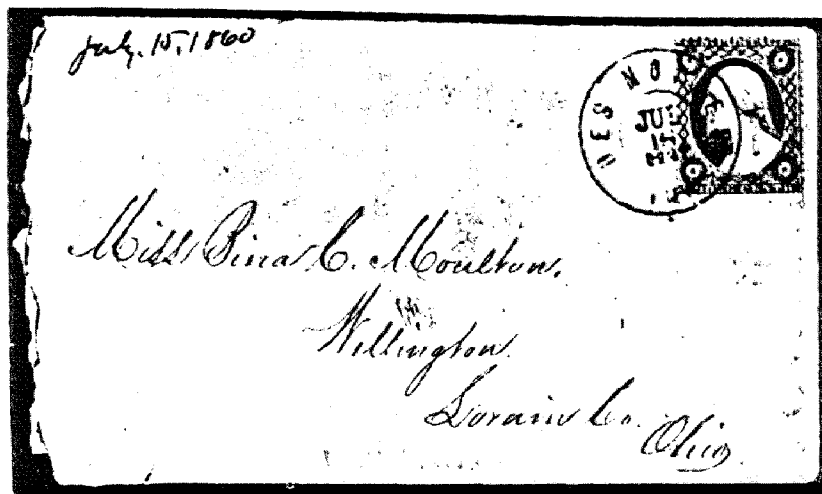


Fig. 64. DES MOINES/IOA/JUL 16 1860, the earliest known use of Type 9, with the 3c 1857 (#26a). The enclosed letter written by "Sam" says Hoyt [former Des Moines postmaster Hoyt Sherman] **has just written to Sarah and now lies here on the floor endeavoring to get cool. It is the hottest day we have had this season and not a breath of air stirring.**

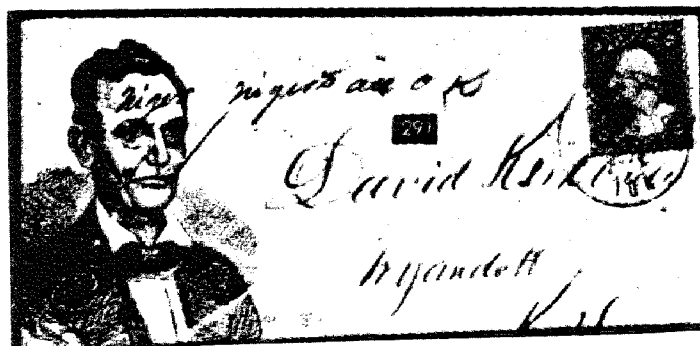


Fig. 65. DES MOINES/IOA/AUG 11 1860, Type 9 used with 3c 1857 (#26) on Lincoln campaign cover of unknown manufacture which is addressed to Wyandott, Kansas Territory. The sender, a racially prejudiced opponent of Lincoln, has written "Niger" across Lincoln's forehead, and has him proclaiming "Nigers all OK." Such feelings were promoted by the **low State Journal** which throughout the campaign quoted an 1858 speech in which Lincoln said "I have always hated slavery, I think as much as any Abolitionist." This cover was sold as lot #291 in Robert A. Siegel's May 18, 1976, sale of the A. Murl Kimmel collection.

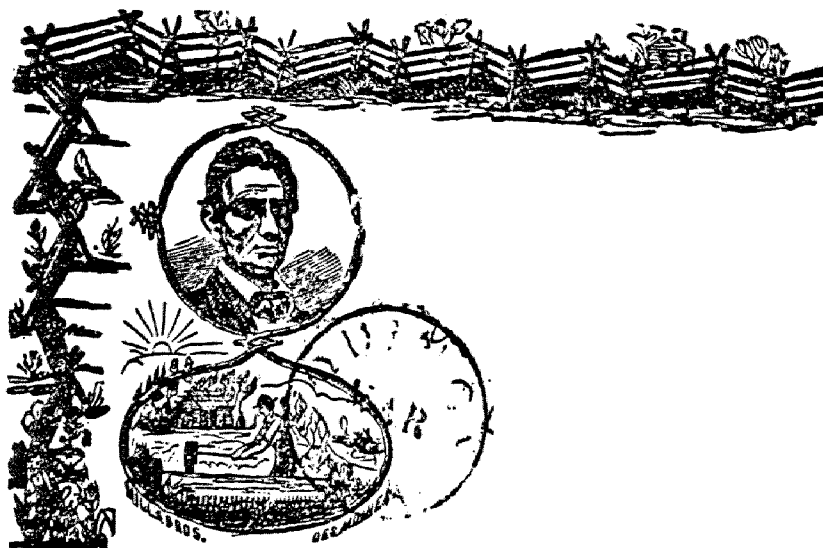
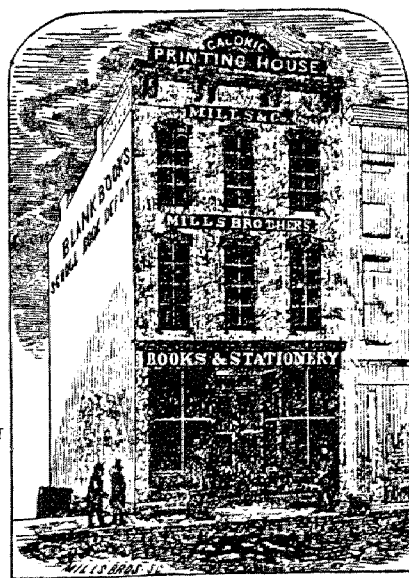


Fig. 66. Mills & Co. Lincoln campaign cover bearing postmark of QUINCY/ IOWA/MAR (?) [1861]. Note the firm's imprint under the lower vignette. This cover was sold as lot #644 of Robert A. Siegel's June 9-10, 1959 sale of the Hugh M. Clark collection.

Printing, Publishing & Stationery Warehouse, DES MOINES, IOWA.

MILLS & Co.,
BLANK BOOK
Manufacturers,
Book Binders,
AND
Dealers in
OFFICE
Stationery.

Binders to State of
Iowa



Mills Brothers,
PRINTERS,
Publishers,
STATIONERS,
& Booksellers.
Agents for
NEW MAP OF IOWA.
Dodd's Safes,
Seal Presses,
NEWS INK, &c.

Fig. 67. Mills & Co. building, taken from an 1862 advertisement sheet laid in State legislative volumes which the firm had a binding contract for. At this time Mills & Co. advertised stationery of the "... best quality of papers of all descriptions - Legal Cap, Foolscap, Letter and Note Papers; Envelopes, Commercial, Official and Document ... together with every article in the Stationery line that is useful, desirable or ornamental."



Fig. 68. John Teesdale, seventh postmaster, who served from May 6, 1861, to April 17, 1867.

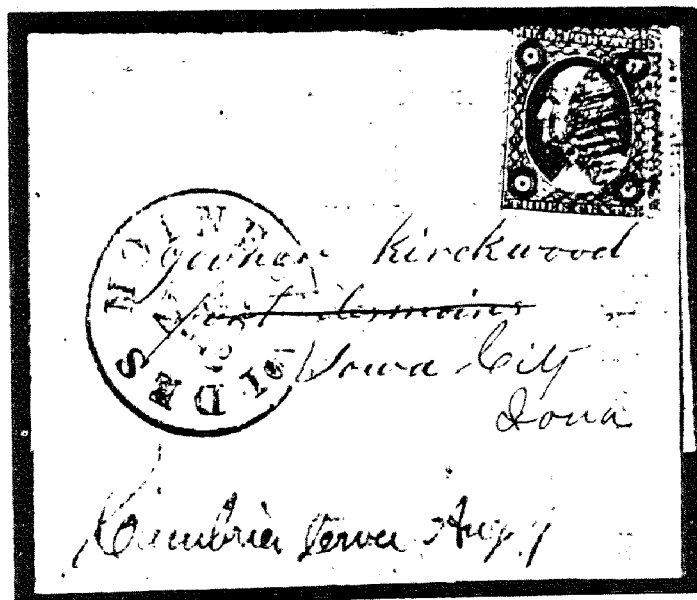


Fig. 69. **DES MOINES/Iowa./AUG 14 1861**, the latest known use of Type 5 combined with the latest known use of the 1857 issue (#26) from Des Moines. The stamp covers another #26 which carried the letter from Cambria, Iowa, to Des Moines. In the enclosed letter from Wayne Co. dated Aug. 8, 1861, Arbuckle Nelson informs Governor Kirkwood that the people of this Southern frontier of Iowa[,] especially in Wayne County[,] feel that danger [sic] is close at hand from the Rebels in Missouri and offers to help organize a home guard rifle company in Wayne County. The rebels knowing that we are orga[n]ised & armed they will not approach. . .

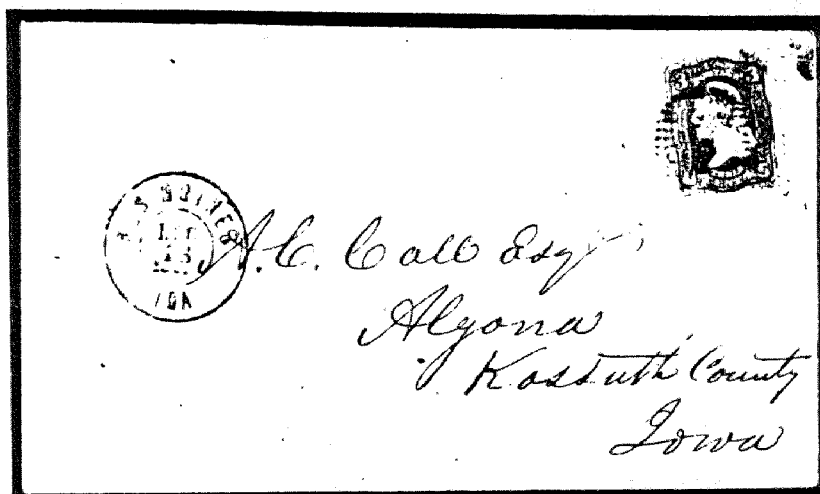


Fig. 70. DES MOINES/IOA/DEC 18 1861, Type 9 with #65, the earliest known use of the 1861 issue from Des Moines. Mayor Ira Cook continues his land business as usual during war times: Enclosed we hand you list of land belonging to John J. Dixwell in your county on which we wish you to pay taxes for 1861. . . Can you save us anything by buying county warrants?

PATRIOTIC.—A large stock of Union Paper and Envelopes, all styles, put up assorted if desired. Sold very low by the ream or thousand. Union Paper at from \$2.50 to \$5.00 per Ream; Union Envelopes at from \$1.50 to \$3.00 per Box; Red, White and Blue papers at \$3.00 to \$5.00 per Ream: *Loyal Iowa*, an elegant Union Envelope, at \$2.50 per Box. Letter Heads printed on "Union" paper at very low rates—a new and attractive way of advertising.

Fig 71. Mills & Company advertisement for patriotic stationary published in their **Capital Reporter** of April 1862.

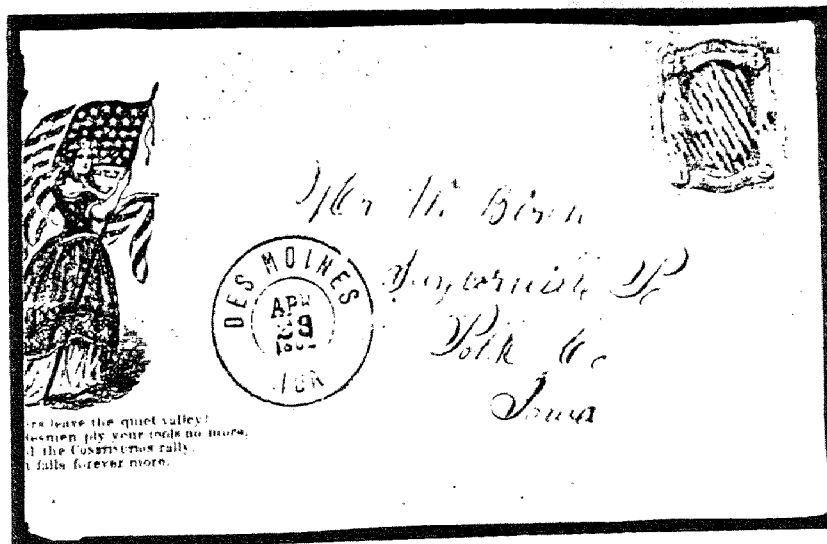


Fig. 72. **DES MOINES/IOA/APR 23 1862**, a fine strike of Type 9, with 3c 1861 (#65) on slightly reduced patriotic cover bearing light transfer impression of a patriotic letter sheet (now missing).

Proposals

WILL be received by J. H. Hatch, at his store on
 Court Avenue on, the 9th day of August, 1862,
 for furnishing materials, and building eleven build-
 ings for barracks. Proposals to be for one or more,
 for soldiers quarters. Each one with forty-eight
 bunks, capable of holding one hundred men. The
 buildings to be fifty by eighteen feet, and to be
 twelve feet high on each side. Plans and specifica-
 tions to be seen at the place of letting.

I will also receive at the same time and place, pro-
 posals for furnishing ten thousand feet of square
 edged, hard wood boards, one inch thick, and from
 12 to 16 feet long—sound and good lumber, subject
 to my approval. Also three thousand feet of scant-
 ling for 3x3 to 3x4. For particulars, specifications
 to be seen at the store of Barns & Hatch.

J. H. HATCH,
 Acting Quarter Master.

2d Aug. 6.

Proposals for Hardware.

PROPOSALS will be received by the undersigned,
 until 12 o'clock A. M. of the 7th instant, for
 furnishing the articles of Hardware for the 2d Reg-
 iment Iowa Volunteers.

25 Dozen Knives and Forks.
 2000 Pint Tin Cups.
 1000 Tin Plates.

J. H. HATCH,
 Acting Quarter Master.
 2d Regiment Iowa Volunteers.

August 6th, 62.

Fig. 73. Call for bids for build-
 ing and equipping "Camp Burn-
 side" as published in the Daily
 State Register of August 6,
 1862.

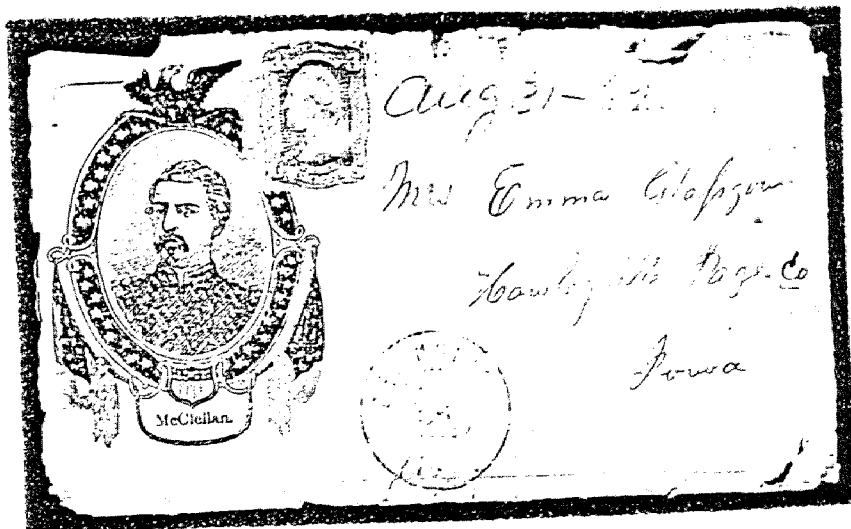


Fig. 74. DES MOINES / IOA / AUG 25 1862 (Type 9) and franked with a 3c 1861 (#65). Writing from "Burnside Barracks" on August 24, 1862, Private Samuel H. Glassgow, Company F, 23rd Regt. Iowa Infantry, informed his wife,

We arrived here last night about 6 o'clock and was marched Directly to our quarters (which is $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles East of town) which we found Furnished with Grub and Blankets, axes, picks, hatchets, spads, and cooking Utensils which we had the Pleasure of using for the last two meals . . . I suppose you would like to know something about our Journey here . . . Some of the secesh [secessionists] will not forgit us soon[;] every man that would not cheer for the Union we stop and make him cheer and then administer the oath . . . it is amusing to see the Boys. Some are singing, some reading their Bibles, some were Playing cards. Lieutenant Rawlings told the boys to dry up the cards amediately. I tell you it looks hostile about here[;] we can go so far and no farther .

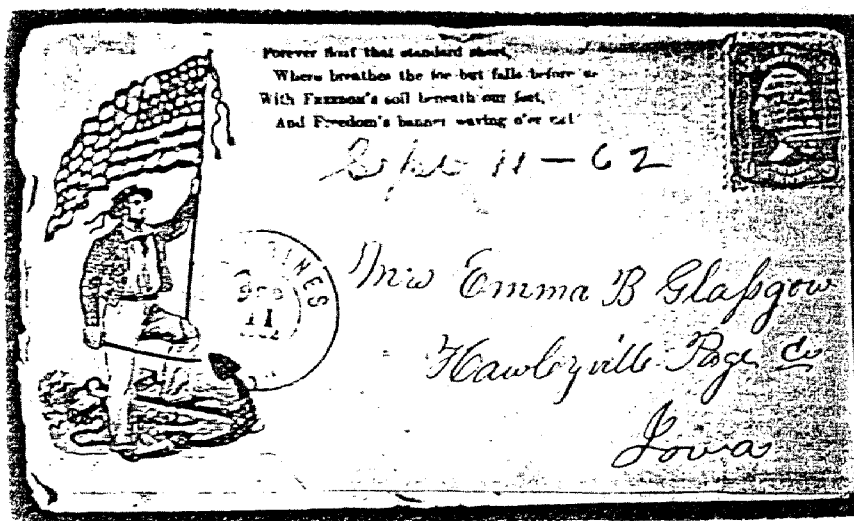


Fig. 75. Type 9 **DES MOINES / IOA** marking dated **SEP 11 1862**, and franked with a 3c 1861. Mrs. Glasgow learns the following from her husband at Camp Burnside, located a mile and a half east of Des Moines:

We are waiting for Capt. Hendeshott of Davenport to Muster us into U.S. Service and pay our Bounty before we leave here . . . the Western Stage Co. is to take us to Eddiville we go from there to Keokuk and from there to Benton Barracks, St Louis[,] and God only knows where we will go to from there . . . We have news that the Indians are Devestating the White Settlements on the Fronteer of Minesota and it may be we will have to go and fight them . . . We have some fun once and awhile[;] last tuesd[ay] night . . . about 200 boys broke guard there was 300 men detailed to fetch them in[.] They were after some "Bawdy Women" . . . McClelans campaign has turned out to be a fizzle so reports say. I dont think they can do any thing untill we get there.



Fig. 76. DES MOINES/IOA/SEP 15 1862, Type 9, with 3c 1861 (#65) tied by earliest known Des Moines use of the common target killer of the 1860s. The patriotic cover carries another Camp Burnside letter from private Glassgow. I am well satisfied with the service it is just what I expected, we have comfortable quarters[,] plenty to eat & drink [and] have to Drill about 6 hours in the day . . . we are under the command of Pope his Head quarters are at St Paul Min. We may go to fight the Indians and may not. . . You said the hogs were eating up our corn. I ought to be there with the old shot Gun. Can't you find out whos hogs they are and tell them for me that any man that will let his hogs distroy a soldiers corn is worse than a Secesh and no man atal. . . It is hard to tell when we wi'l be back as the Rebels are gaining ground Defeating our forces at every front. . .

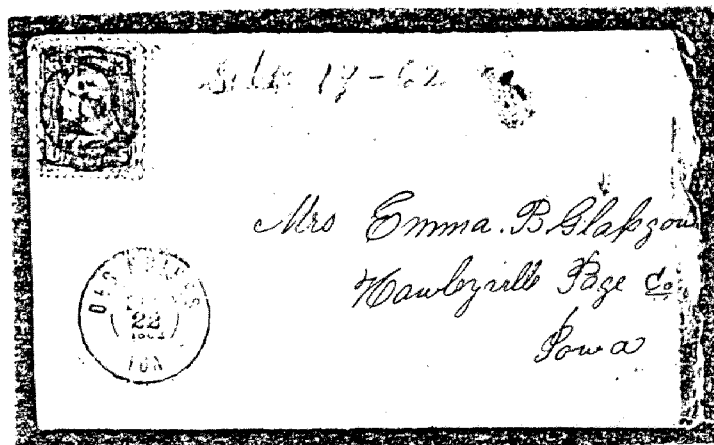


Fig. 77. DES MOINES/IOA/SEP 22 1862, Type 9, with 3c 1861 (#65).

In his last letter from Camp Burnside Private Samuel H. Glassgow relates the exuberance of the troops when they learned cheerful news from the battle areas:

Yesterday the whole Regiment was down to the Fair at Des Moines in full Uniform we had a good time of it as we came back through the city we halted at the Telegraph Office the Operator announced that the news had just come that Bull Run was avenged we gave 3 cheers he then said that McLellon [sic] had gained a decisive victory with Longstreet and his entire Division and you ought to have heard the cheers from 1000 men it seemed as though the Heavens & Earth wer coming together I know I threw my hat twenty feet high.

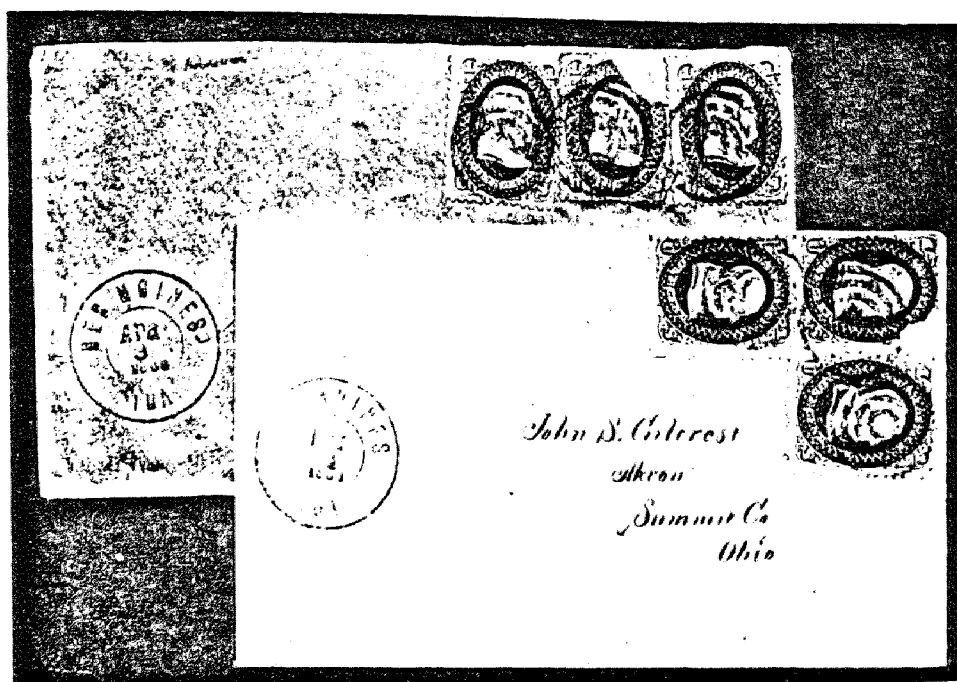


Fig. 78. DES MOINES/10A/APR 9 1863 and MAY 1, 1863, Type 9, with 1c 1861 (#63).



Fig. 79. The Demoine House at First and Walnut was one of the city's finest hotels during the Civil War period. In 1857 it joined a host of other western hotels in proclaiming its accommodations "superior to any house west of the Mississippi." It did become a favorite with visiting legislators. The hotel's variant spelling of the word Des Moines can be traced to an 1851 newspaper campaign to "Americanize" the town name by giving it a phonetic spelling.

DEMOLINE HOUSE.

S. F. SPOFFORD & SON, PROPRIETORS.

Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 30th 1863.

Dr. Balch was appointed by you assistant Mayor of the 19th June Bldg. The Doctor was unfortunate in incurring the displeasure of the medical director of his division and was summarily brought before a board of business appointed by the director who reported unfavorable to him and Gen Schepelle removed him out. I have known a great many cases of gross injustice of this kind the case of Dr. Bier of the 3rd Paroloy is one, and I believe this case is another, the 19th has far more the right as I understand, and is now out of Schepelle's district, if Dr. Balch could be appointed & appointed he would have no difficulty in getting along

Dr. Balady
Printed to be kept -
Printed by

I know nothing of the facts in
this case except from hearsay
but am inclined to believe the
result has been secured to a
great extent by force &
violence. As I feel at heart
a very free & independent
man, I should be gratified
if Mr. Butler could be again
elected by our coming Board
or if that be not necessary
I will again commend
him, but I think the Indian
Board would be to our benefit
in the execution of
their duty to educate
the natives.

Admiral A. H. Murray

If the Governor ^{of Iowa} chooses
to re-appoint Dr. Balch,
the disability or con-
valescence of his dismisal
is hereby removed, and
bring him to do so.

A. Lincoln

July 23. 1863

Fig. 80. Heretofore unpublished note signed by **Abraham Lincoln** on reverse (lower right in illustration) of letter by General Marcellus M. Crocker written from the Demoiné House on June 30, 1863. Crocker, writing to Governor Kirkwood, asks that his friend Dr. Balch be reappointed as surgeon of the 19th Iowa. Kirkwood, doubting his authority in the matter, forwarded the letter to the President. On July 23, 1863, Lincoln wrote, "If the Governor of Iowa chooses to re-appoint Dr. Balch the disability in consequence of his dismissal is hereby removed, enabling him to do so."

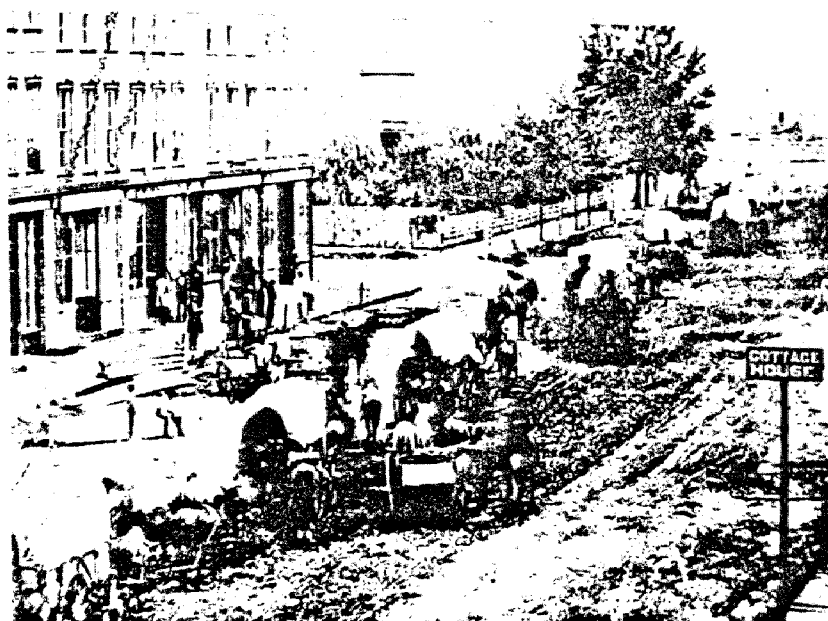


Fig. 81. One of the earliest known photographs of a Des Moines street scene is this view of the baggage train of the 7th Iowa Cavalry moving west on Court Avenue between 3rd and 5th Streets. This photograph, taken August 12, 1863, was probably the work of William Schreck whose third floor photographic gallery in Sherman's Block overlooked the scene. Note the Polk County court house partially visible in upper right hand corner. Upon reaching Omaha the 7th was split up and assigned to various posts across Nebraska Territory. During the period 1863-66 portions of the regiment participated in the Indian battles of Horse Creek, White Stone Hill, Tahkahokutah, Bad Lands, Little Blue, Julesburg, Mud Springs, and Rush Creek.

Daily State Register.

Local and Miscellaneous.

CITY OF DES MOINES.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 1864.

POSTAL ARRANGEMENTS.

| | |
|---|--|
| Eastern via Chicago and Davenport arrives at 6 A. M. | Xenia Thursdays and Saturdays arrives at 6 P. M. |
| Eastern via Chicago and Davenport closes at 7 P. M. | " Mondays and Wednesdays closes at 7 P. M. |
| Southern via Okaloosa & Keokuk arrives at 9 A. M. | Boonsboro Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays arrives at 4 P. M. |
| " " closes at 2 P. M. | Boonsboro Sundays, Tuesdays and Saturdays closes at 7 P. M. |
| Western via Adel arrives at 4 P. M. | Newark and Vandalia Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays arrives at 6 P. M. |
| " " closes at 7 P. M. | Newark and Vandalia Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays closes at 7 P. M. |
| Winterset arrives at 4 P. M. | Indianola (via Summerset) Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays arrives at 12 M. |
| " " closes at 7 P. M. | Indianola (via Summerset) Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays closes at 1 P. M. |
| Fort Dodge except Sundays and Mondays arrives at 5 P. M. | Indianola, (via Hartford) Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays arrives at 6 P. M. |
| Fort Dodge except Fridays and Saturdays closes at 7 P. M. | Indianola (via Hartford) Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays closes at 7 P. M. |
| | Nevada Tuesdays and Saturdays arrives at 6 P. M. |
| | " Sundays and Thursdays closes at 7 P. M. |
| | New Jefferson Sundays arrives at 4 P. M. |
| | " " Sundays and Wednesdays closes at 7 P. M. |
| | No mails to connect with the Rail Roads depart on Saturdays. |
| | No mails to connect from the Rail Roads arrive on Monday. |
| | Office opened except Sunday from 8 A. M. until 7 P. M. |
| | Office open on Sundays from 9 to 10 A. M. |
| | J. TRESDALE, P. M. |
| | Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 11th, 1864. |

Fig. 82. Des Moines Post Office schedule as published in the Register of January 16, 1864. Note mention of railhead connections at the end of the list.



Fig. 83. **DES MOINES/IOA/SEP 7 1864**, the latest known use of Type 9, with 3c 1861 (#65)

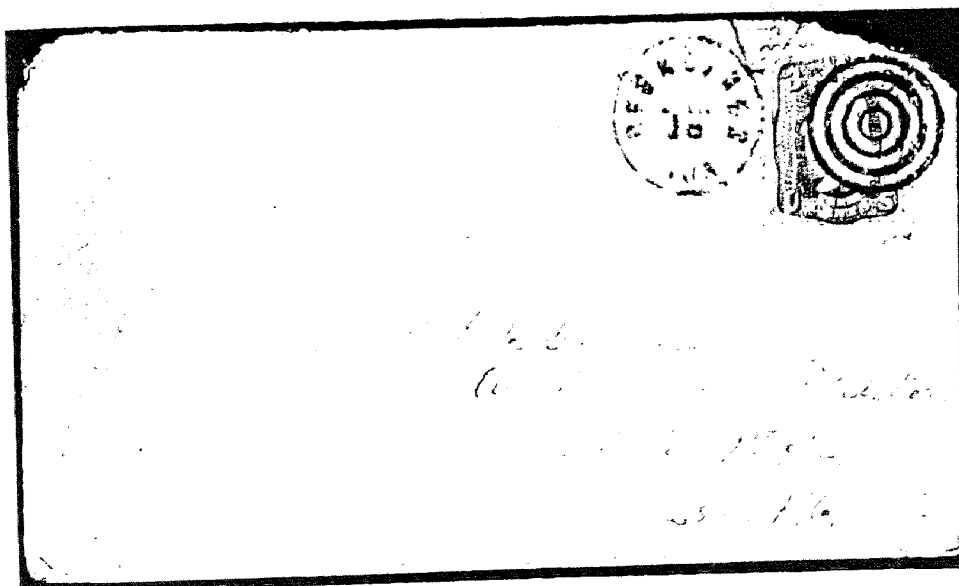


Fig. 84. **DES MOINES/IOA/JAN 18 [1865]**, the earliest known use of Type 10, with 3c 1861 (#65). No longer would the town-name marking be placed on the opposite side of the cover from the killer; they were now connected as integral parts of a single cancelling device. This cover is addressed to an Indiana doctor serving as Asst. Surgeon of the 129th Indiana, then in the field near Nashville, Tennessee, with Gen. Schofield's 23rd Army Corps.

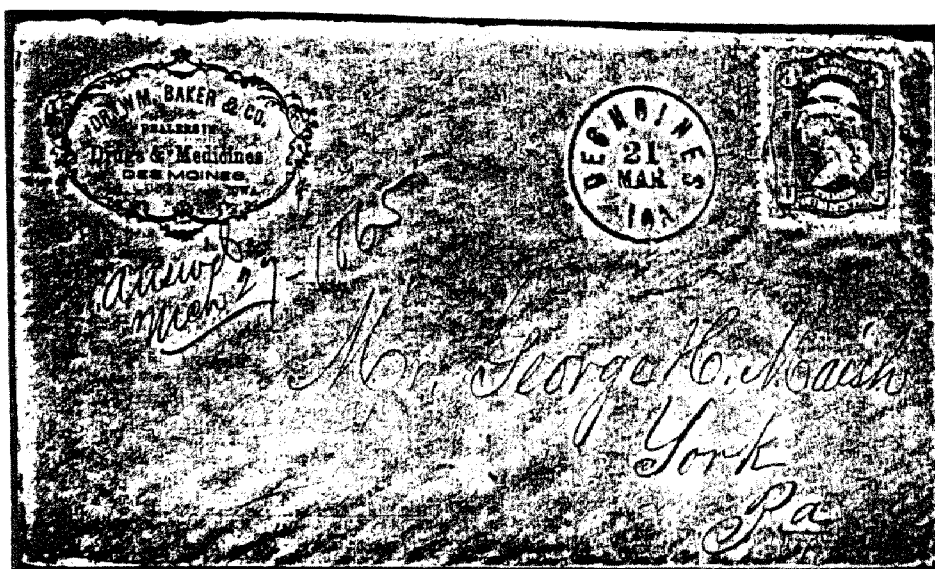


Fig. 85. DES MOINES/10A/21 Mar [1865], Type 10, with 3c 1861 (#65).



Fig. 86. DES MOINES/10A/16 APR [1865], Type 10, with pair of the 3c 1861 (#65). Grocer J. A. Ankeney tells of receiving the news of Lincoln's assassination. This [Sunday, April 15] was a beautiful morning. I arose early, came down to the store, went to my breakfast, returned to the store, and was sitting, reading the morning paper, and talking with a friend how rapidly the war was drawing to a close, when a boy came running in the store and said, have you heard the news, Lincoln was murdered last night. I cannot express my feelings at the time, a cold chill ran over me. I felt shocked. We immediately started for the Tel-office, where we found the first part of the enclosed dispatch had been recd. In a few minutes the streets were thronged with persons, eager to hear the news. In a short time the Bells were tolling the death knell, Flags were run up at half mask, draped in mourning, about 9 oclock a proclamation was issued by the Mayor, to suspent business. . . The enclosed extra was soon issued. The sidewalks near the Tel-office were crowded all day . . . what effect it will have on our country God alone knows. I look upon it as being a sad blow upon the South as well as upon the North. . . .

Daily State Register.

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 1865.

EXTRA.

DEATH OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN!

DES MOINES, April 15, 1865.

The following dispatch has just been received:

President Lincoln was shot through the head last night at Ford's Theatre and died this morning. The assassin is supposed to be J. Wilkes Booth.

About the same time a desperado called at Secretary Seward's, pretending to be a messenger from his physician. Being refused admittance, he attacked Fred. Seward, son of the Secretary, knocking him down; then passed on to the Secretary's room, where, after cutting down two male attendants, he cut Mr. Seward's throat. The wound at last accounts was not considered fatal.

Letters found in Booth's trunk show that this assassination was contemplated before the 4th of March, but fell through from some cause.

The wildest excitement prevails at Washington. The Vice President's House and residences of the different Secretaries are closely guarded.

LATER. Mr. Seward died this morning

Fig. 87. Register extra announcing the awful news from Washington. It was enclosed with J. A. Ankeney's letter (Fig. 86).

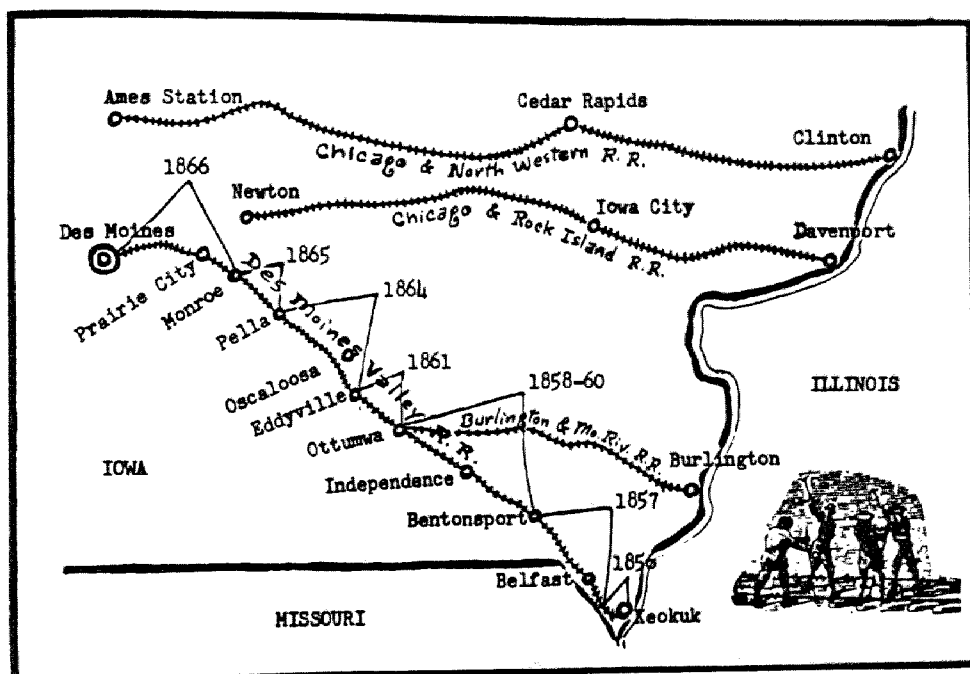


Fig. 88. Iowa railroads serving Des Moines by September 1866. Note the construction dates for the Des Moines Valley Railroad.

Keokuk, Fort Des Moines and Minnesota Railroad,

SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE,

KEOKUK, IOWA, SEPT. 10th, 1860.

Dear Sir:

On and after Monday, the 17th inst., a MAIL TRAIN will leave Keokuk at 5.40 A. M., arriving at Independence—one mile below Lowaville—at 9.00 A. M., connecting with Stages running direct to Ottumwa, by which Passengers will arrive there at 12 M.

RETURNING—Passengers will take the Stage at Ottumwa at 12 M., meeting Train at Independence at 5 P. M., and arriving in Keokuk at 8.35 P. M., in time for the Packet to St. Louis.

A FREIGHT AND ACCOMMODATION TRAIN will leave Independence at 5.40 A. M., and arrive in Keokuk at 10 A. M.

Returning, will leave Keokuk at 4.10 P. M., and arrive at Independence at 8.20 P. M.

The Road is progressing as rapidly as the Iron can be laid down, and it is expected the Cars will run to Ottumwa early in October next.

W. H. HIGGINS, SEPT.



Fig. 89. Towle 757-S-1, the first postmark employed by the Des Moines Valley Railroad (under their original name). It is superimposed over the bottom of an 1860 mail train schedule, showing that the word **Independent** in the postmark, in all probability, referred to the September 10, 1860 terminus known as **Independence** station.



Fig. 90. At the same time that the Keokuk road was making money transporting government troops and supplies, it also issued free passes such as this to influential businessmen and to high-ranking military officers brought back to Des Moines on personal or government business.

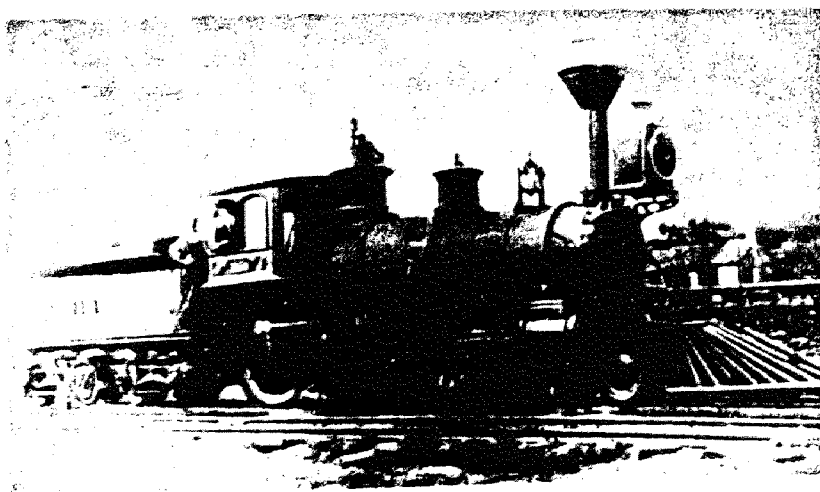


Fig. 91. Des Moines Valley Railroad locomotive No. 114 (the "Keokuk") the first engine to enter Des Moines upon the completion of the road in late August 1866.

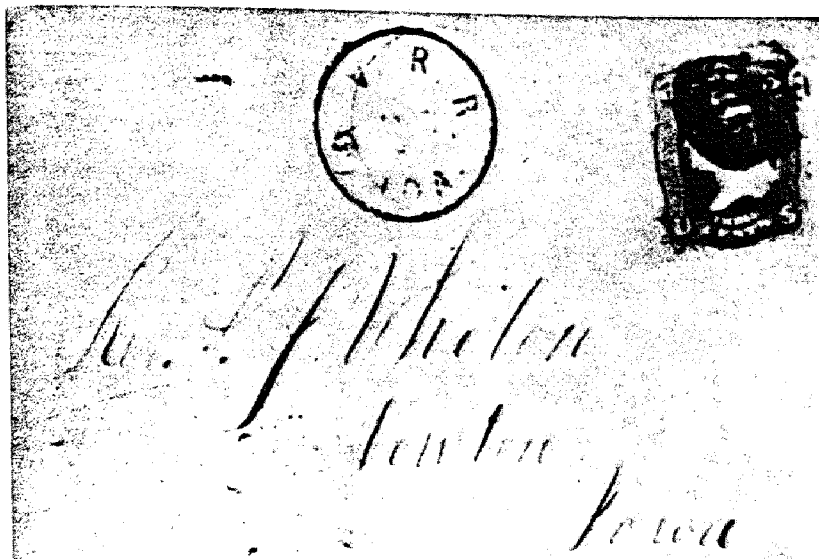


Fig. 92. **D.V.R.R./IOA./NOV 30** [circa 1867-69], Towle 757-A-1, the second postmark known to have been employed by the Des Moines Valley R.R. with grilled 3c 1867 (#94). This marking is unique in that it is the only Iowa railroad postmark known which shows the state name at the bottom, in the same fashion as a regular town postmark.

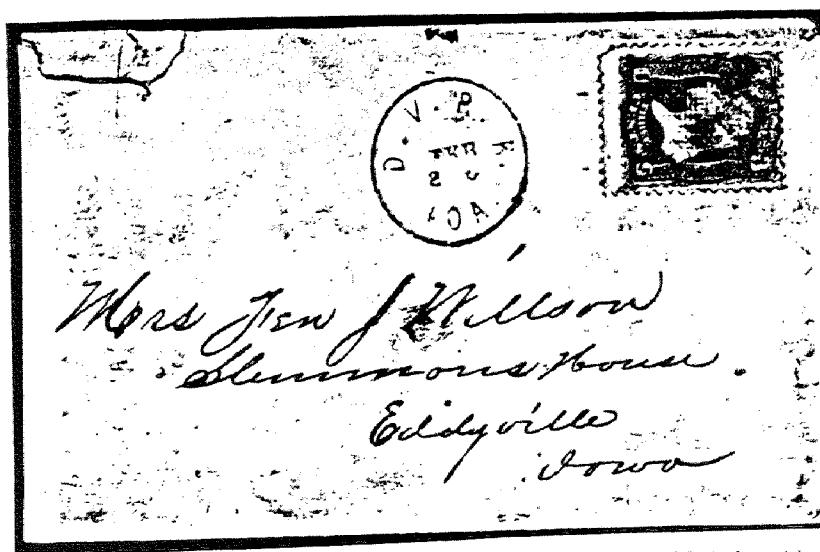


Fig. 93. **D.V.R.R./IOA./FEB 22** [circa 1868-69], Towle 757-A-1, with grilled 3c 1867 (#94).

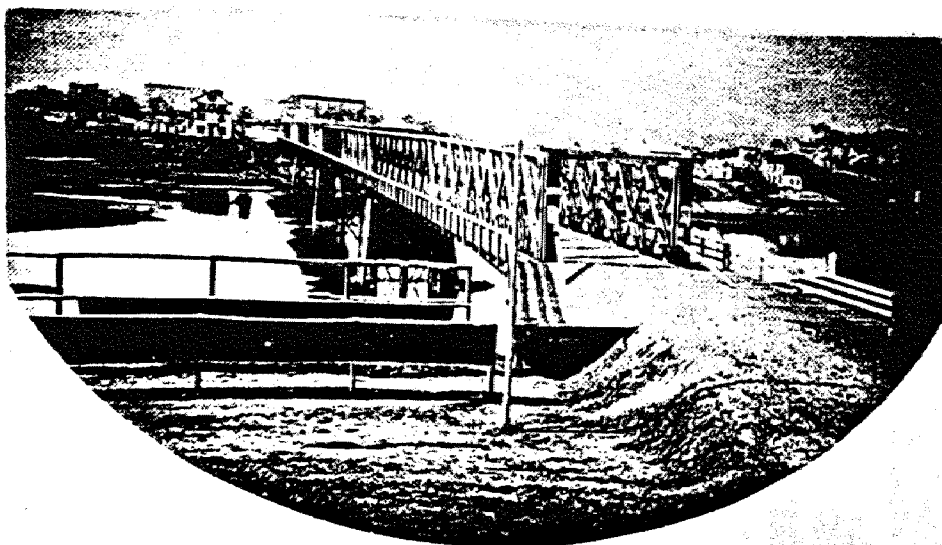


Fig. 94. View of the just-completed Walnut Street Bridge (looking west), a photograph taken in fall of 1866. Note Demoine House to left of bridge on other side of river. The narrow, overhead sign at bridge entrance reads **Five Dollars Fine For Driving Over This Bridge Faster Than a Walk**. The poster tacked onto lower portion of left-front bridge pillar is the same as that in Fig. 95.

RATES OF TOLL

ON
WALNUT ST.
BRIDGE.

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1 Horse Wagon, each crossing, | 15 Cents. |
| 2 Horse, Cattle or Mule Team, each crossing, | 20 " |
| 1 Horse Vehicle, each crossing, | 15 " |
| 4 Horse Vehicle, " " " " | 30 " |
| Horseman, each crossing, | 10 " |
| Each extra span or yoke, each crossing, | 10 " |
| <hr/> | |
| Horses per head, | 5 Cents. |
| Mules " " " " | 5 " |
| Cattle " " " " | 3 " |
| Hogs " " " " | 2 " |
| Sheep " " " " | 2 " |
| <hr/> | |
| TICKETS. | |
| 25, One-horse Vehicle, | \$1.75, |
| 50, " " " " | 3.00 |
| 25, Two-horse Vehicle, | 2.75 |
| 50, " " " " | 5.00 |

Tickets good for one crossing only. May be had at the First National Bank, Walnut Street, Des Moines.

SPOFFORD & LAIRD,
Des Moines, Oct. 23d, 1866. Committee.

Fig. 95. Broadside giving toll rates on the new Walnut Street Bridge. It is dated Oct. 23, 1866, and was printed by the **Register**. This copy was discovered in court records 94 years after its printing.



Fig. 96. Attitude of Copperheads toward the soldier. An anti-Democratic cartoon which launched the postwar era of Republicanism in Des Moines. It ran in the *Register* Sept. 19—Oct. 3, 1865.



Fig. 97. Building which served as Des Moines post office from January 1, 1866 to November 30, 1870. It was located on Third Street, just north of Court Avenue (behind Sherman Block).

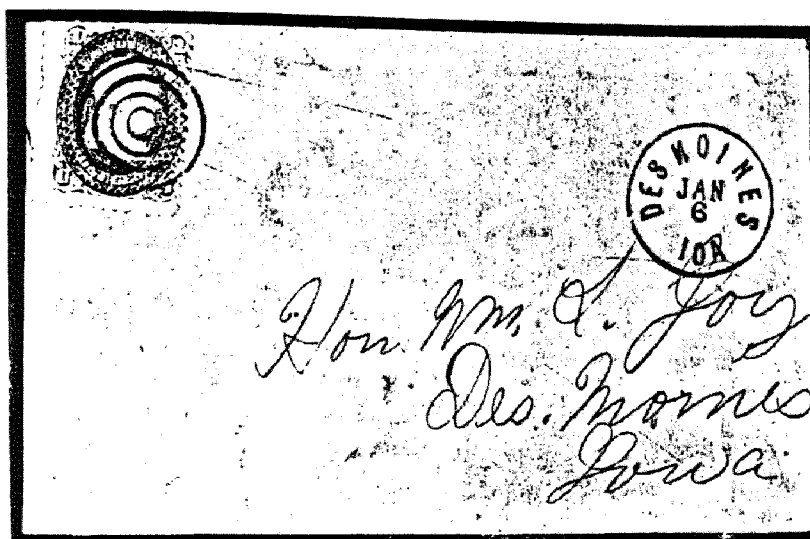


Fig. 98. **DES MOINES/IOA/JAN 6** [1866], Type 10, with 1c 1861 (#63) on drop letter. The two partial strikes of Type 10 give the target killer the misleading appearance of being a separate cancelling device instead of the duplex device that it was. The recipient, William L. Joy, was a Sioux City lawyer who was elected to the state legislature in 1865

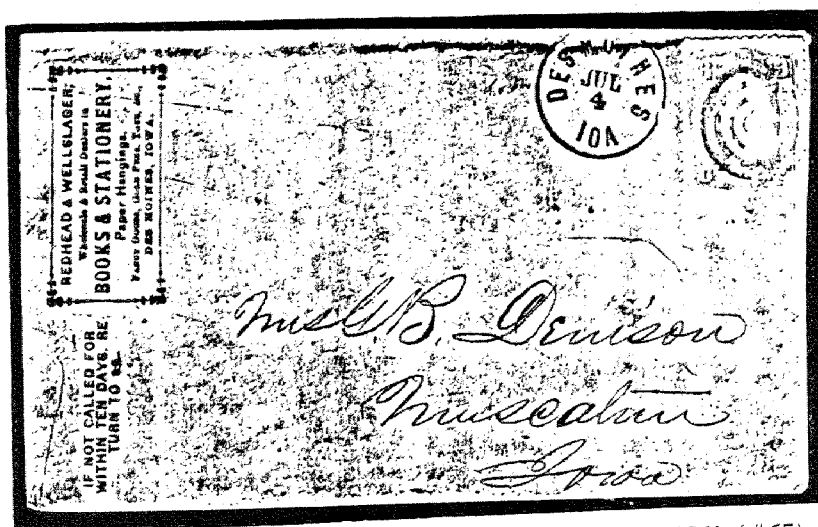


Fig. 99. **DES MOINES/IOA/JUL 4** [1866], Type 10, with 3c 1861 (#65) on cover bearing corner card of Wesley Redhead's bookstore.

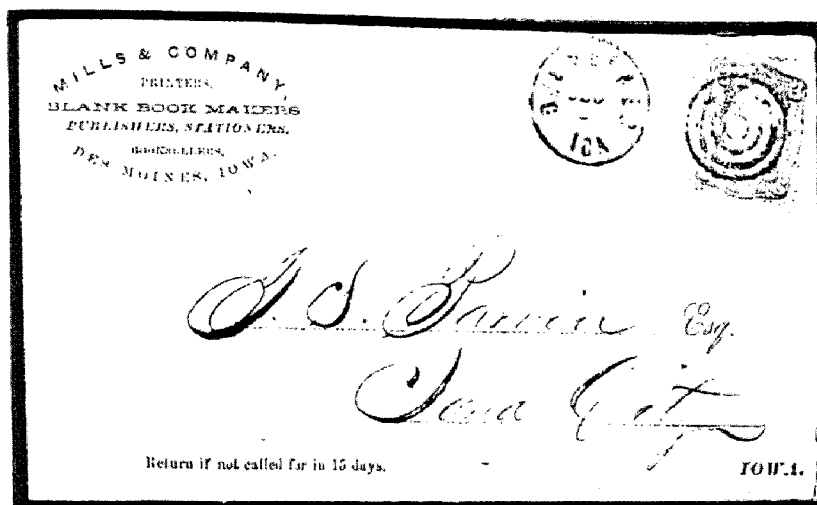


Fig. 100. **DES MOINES/IOA/DEC 1** [1866], the latest known use of Type 10, with 3c 1861 (#65) on cover bearing corner card of Mills & Company. On Dec. 6, 1866, the **Register** announced that Mills & Co. had purchased the newspaper and had promised to continue it **in the interest of the Radical Republican Party**.

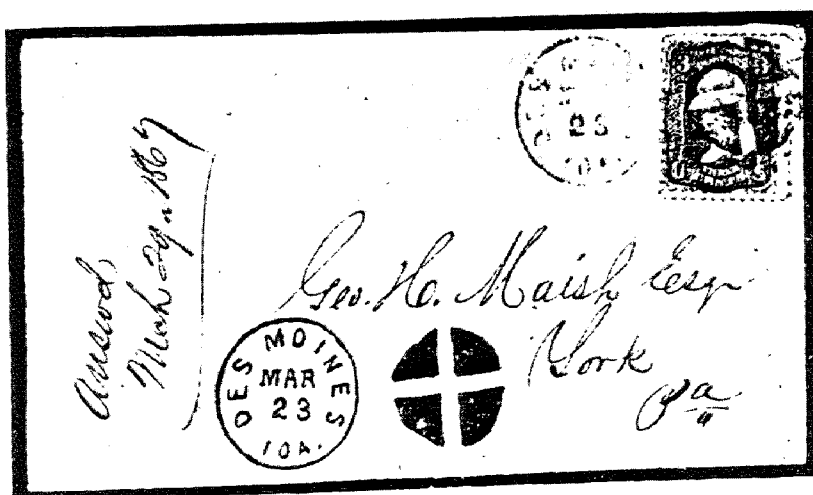


Fig. 101. **DES MOINES/IOA/MAR 23** [1867], the earliest known use of Type 11, employing common cut-cork, cross-roads killer and used with 3c 1861 (#65). Covers important to the study of local postal history are often not the prettiest. Because the postmark is so weak a tracing has been superimposed at bottom.

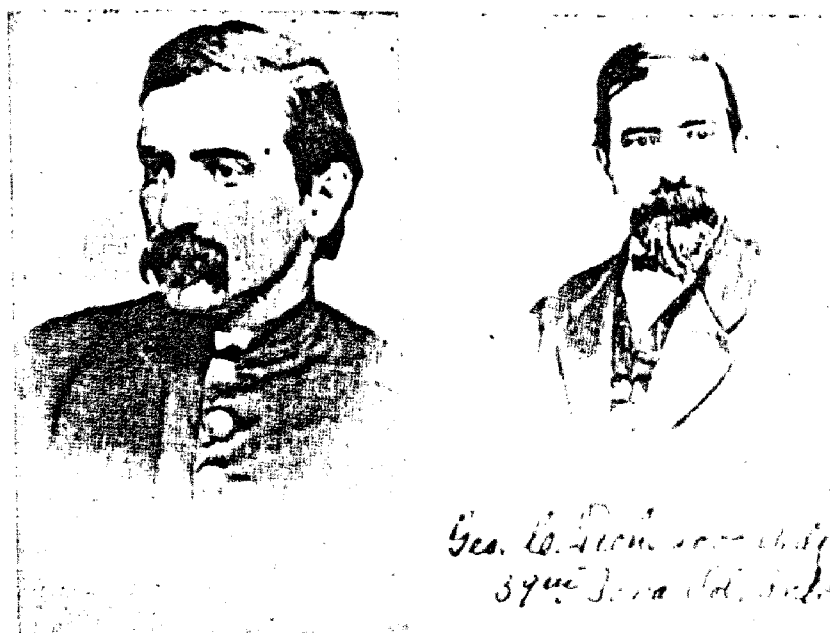


Fig. 102. George C. Tichenor, eighth postmaster who, according to official records, served April 18, 1867 to July 27, 1871. The photo at left shows him circa 1864 as aide-de-camp of Brigadier General Grenville M. Dodge, and right, circa 1869, as Des Moines postmaster. The postwar photo was probably made and autographed for distribution to friends at an Army of the Tennessee reunion held in Louisville, Ky., in November 1869.

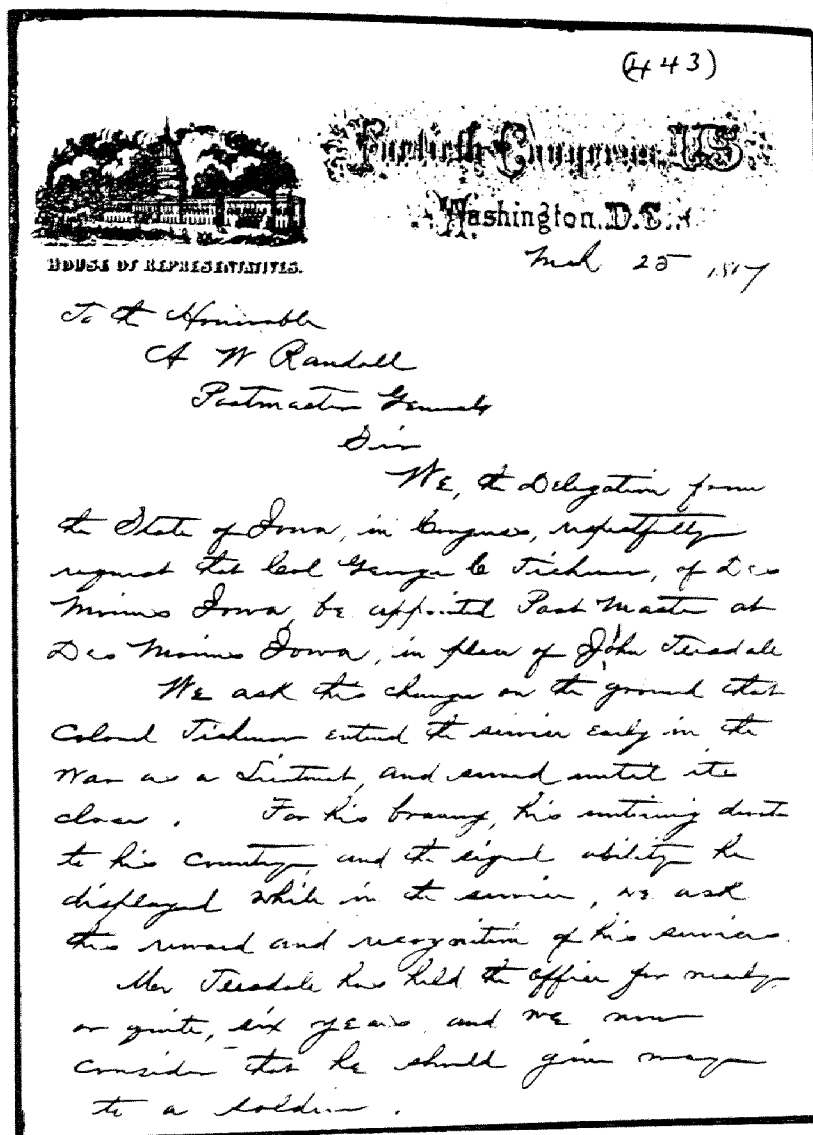


Fig. 103. Retained file copy of Grenville M. Dodge's letter to Postmaster General Alexander W. Randall asking that Tichenor be appointed postmaster at Des Moines. Mr. Teesdale has held the office for nearly, or quite, six years, and We now consider that he should give way to a soldier.

Fig. 104. First page of George Tichenor's letter to Grenville M. Dodge expressing thanks for his appointment. God bless you . . . I have no words to Express My gratitude to you and can only say that I hope you know Me well enough to realize how very thankful I am to you—A day or two will serve to Make matters all right with our friends . . .

474 (170)
 Mrs Morris Iowa
 April 18th 1867
 Dear General,
 God bless You.
 The dispatches of this morning
 announce my appointment
 & Confirmation.
 I have no words to express
 my gratitude to you and
 can only say that I hope
 you know me well enough
 to realize how very thankful
 I am to you—
 A day or two will serve
 to make matters all right
 with all our friends—although
 I shall continue to feel
 that Hinton, Palmer & others
 have sought to do me very great
 injustice without the least
 cause or provocation, and while
 I am much anxious for peace



Fig. 105. Mayor Spofford, in the driver's seat, showing off the city's new fire engine—May 9, 1868.



Fig. 106. Albert Ruger's 22 x 28½ inch bird's eye view of Des Moines in 1868. It was published by Merchant's Lithograph Co. of Chicago. Note D.M.V. and C.R.I. & P. railroad lines entering city side by side at bottom right.

CHICAGO

Rock Island and Pacific

RAILROAD

OPEN TO DES MOINES

GREAT PASSENGER ROUTE, WITH UN-
EQUALED FACILITIES.

**ONLY ROUTE FROM DES MOINES TO
CHICAGO WITHOUT CHANGE OF CARS**

Sleeping Cars Attached to all Night Trains.

Two Passenger Trains Leave Des Moines Daily
(Saturdays excepted) as follows:

11:30 A. M. Arrives in CHICAGO next morning
5:45 A. M.

6:30 O'clock P. M. arrives in Chicago next after-
noon at 3:30 P. M.

The 11:30 A. M. train leaves Saturday morning; the
6:30 P. M. train leaves Sunday evening.

Connecting at Chicago with all Trains East

**TICKETS FOR SALE TO ALL PRINCIPAL
POINTS EAST.**

Fig. 107. Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad advertisement appearing in Register of November 25, 1868.

| Arrival and Departure of Mails at the Des Moines Post Office. | | DEPARTS. | |
|--|---|--|-------------------------|
| ARRIVES. | | Eastern, via Chicago..... | 11:15 a. m. ex. Sunday. |
| Eastern via Chicago..... | 5:25 p. m. ex. Sunday. | Thro' Davenport and Chicago... | 6 p. m. " |
| Thro' Davenport and Chicago... | 7 a. m. " Sunday. | Southern, via D. V. E. B..... | 7:30 a. m. " " |
| Southern, via D. V. E. B..... | 8 p. m. " Sunday. | Western, via Adel..... | 7 a. m. " " |
| Western, via Adel..... | 8 p. m. " Monday. | Northern, via Booneboro..... | 7 a. m. ex. Sat. & Sun. |
| Northern, via Booneboro..... | 8 p. m. ex. Sun. & Mon. | " Xenia..... | 7 a. m. Tues. & Thurs. |
| " Xenia..... | 8 p. m. W. & Friday. | North-Eastern, via Nevada..... | 2 a. m. ex. Sunday..... |
| North-Eastern, via Nevada..... | 8 p. m. ex. Monday. | North-Western, via Montana..... | 7 a. m. ex. Sat. & Sun. |
| North-Western, via Montana..... | 8 p. m. ex. Sun. & Mon. | South-Western, via D. V. E. B..... | 7:30 a. m. ex. Sunday. |
| South-Western, via D. V. E. B..... | 8 p. m. ex. Sunday. | Winteret..... | 7 a. m. " " |
| Winteret..... | 8 p. m. " " | Indianola, via Summeret..... | 7 a. m. " " |
| Indianola, via Summeret..... | 11 a. m. " " | " Hartford..... | 7 a. m. Tues., Thurs. |
| " Hartford..... | 6 p. m. Tues., Thurs. and Saturdays. | Eastern mails close at 10:30 A. M. and Saturdays. via D. V. E. B. close at 6:45 A. M. Davenport and Chicago through mail at 4:45 P. M. All other mails close at 6:30 A. M. Office open week days from 7 A. M. to 7:30 P. M. and on Sundays from 8:20 to 10 A. M. Railroad time, which is one-half hour earlier than city time. | |
| | | GEO. C. TICHENOR, P. M. | |

Fig. 108. Des Moines mail schedule published in Register of November 22, 1867.

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| M. PHIPSON & MURRAY, Attorneys at Law, WINTERSET, IOWA. | S. S. WHELOCK, Dealer in Staple & Fancy GROCERIES, WINTERSET, IOWA. | MADISON WOOLEN MILLS, WINTERSET, IOWA. | CAL BAILLARD CHEMICALS, PAINTS, OILS AND GLASS, WINTERSET, IOWA. | WM. L. LEONARD, CO. TREASURY, WINTERSET, IOWA. |
| S. G. RUBY, Attorney at Law, WINTERSET, Madison County, IOWA. | D. P. KENYON, DEALER IN HARDWARE, STOVES AND TINWARE, WINTERSET, IOWA. | SEVINGTON & HUTCHINGS, Real Estate BROKERS, WINTERSET, IOWA. C. D. SEVINGTON, Pres. Nat. B'n. J. J. HUTCHINGS, Surveyor. | W. C. NEWLON & CO., Agents and Dealers in REAL ESTATE, WINTERSET, IOWA. | FRANK & FOWLER, DEALERS IN STOVES, HANDWARE, Glass, Tin and Copper Ware, DES MOINES, IOWA. |
| WILLARD & FRISH, REAL ESTATE AGENTS, ADEL, IOWA. | ABBOTT & NORTH, Attorneys at Law, ADEL, IOWA. | F. W. SEATON, BANKER, Real Estate Broker, ADEL, Dallas County, IOWA. | ATHERTON & SHARP, Attorneys at Law, ADEL, IOWA. | MILLS & CO., DEALERS IN PIANOS, MELODEONS, DES MOINES. |
| WILLARD, ATWOOD & MICHEVER, Attorneys at Law, ADEL, IOWA. | C. W. DEMOTTE, Dealer in Drugs, Paints, OILS, Lamps & Fixtures, Wall Paper and Stationery, ADEL, IOWA. | J. P. FOSTER, GENERAL Real Estate Agency FOR IOWA. Office at Court Avenue, near Court House, DES MOINES. | MILLS & CO., DEALERS IN Booksellers, Stationers, PRINTERS, BLANK BOOK MAKERS, DES MOINES, IOWA. | CHRISTY, THE 23 Walnut Street, DES MOINES. |

IOWA STATE REGISTER, Des Moines, Iowa; Weekly \$2, Daily \$10 per annum.

Fig. 109. One of two types of "billboard" envelopes known used from Des Moines in 1867-69 period. This one, bearing 1c 1861 (#63), was used September 19, 1868, with Type 11 postmark, as a drop letter.

Return if not called for in 10 days.

HAWKEYE HOUSE.
JNO. ANDERSON, Prop.,
Market St., 3 blocks south of bridge,
2 blocks from the Depots,
EAST DES MOINES, IOWA.

DES MOINES
MAR 12 1869

*G. M. Hentley,
Pickman,
Indians
Earlham College,*

Fig. 110. DES MOINES/IOA./MAR 12 [circa 1868-69], Type 11, with 3c 1867 (#94) on cover bearing corner card of Hawkeye House "2 blocks from the [railroad] Depots."

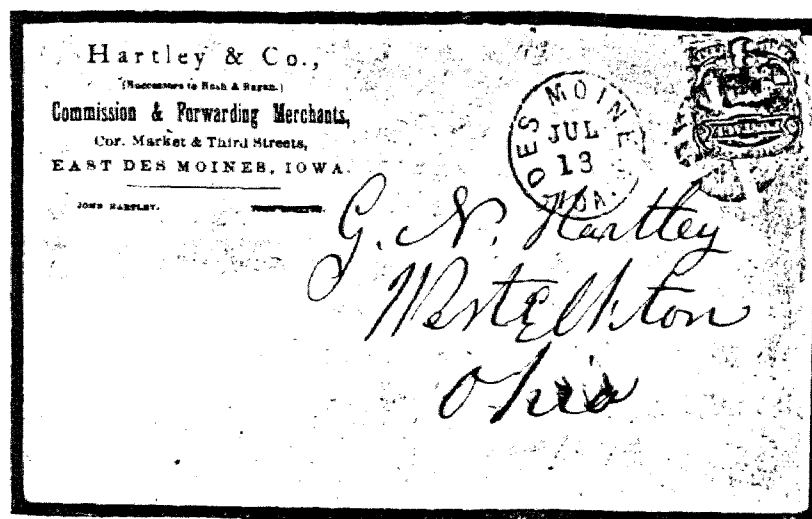


Fig. 111. DES MOINES/IOA./JUL 13 [1869], Type 11 with 3c 1869 (#114), the earliest known Des Moines use of the 1869 issue.

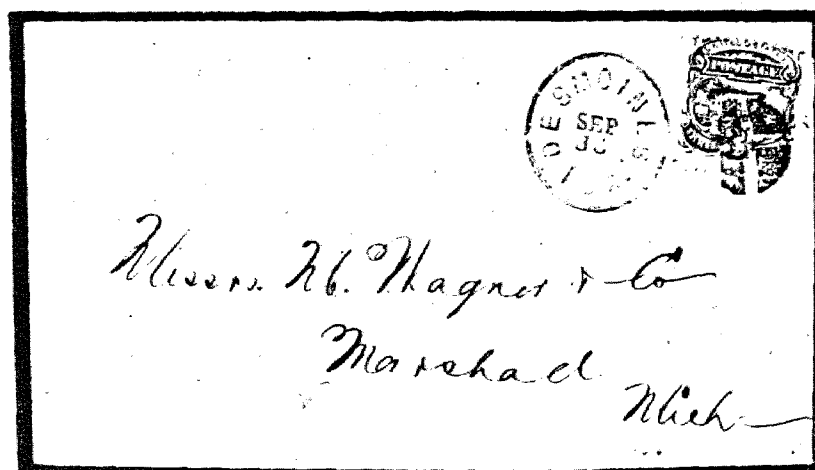


Fig. 112. DES MOINES/IOA./SEP 30 [1869], the earliest known use of Type 12 postmark, with 3c 1869 (#114).

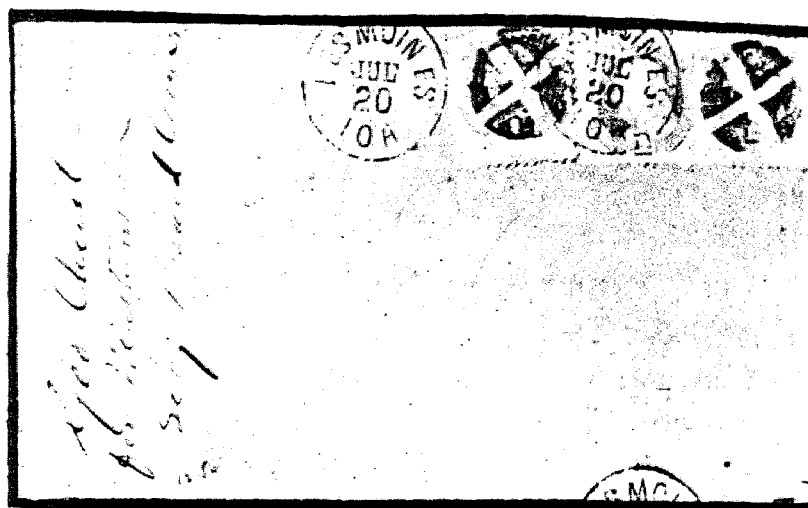


Fig. 113. **DES MOINES/IOA./JUL 20** [1870], the earliest known use of Type 13 postmark, with three copies of 1c 1869 (#112). From the well-known J.O. Crosby correspondence.

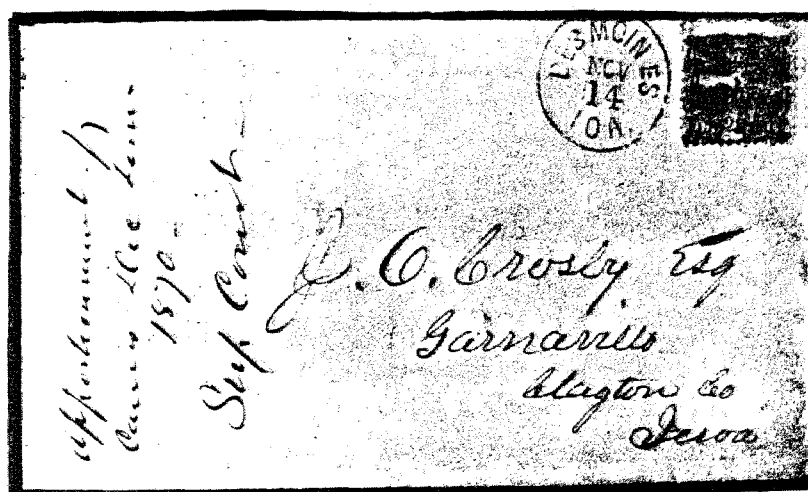


Fig. 114. **DES MOINES/IOA./NOV 14** [1870], Type 13, with 2c 1869 (#113) paying two-ounce unsealed circular rate.

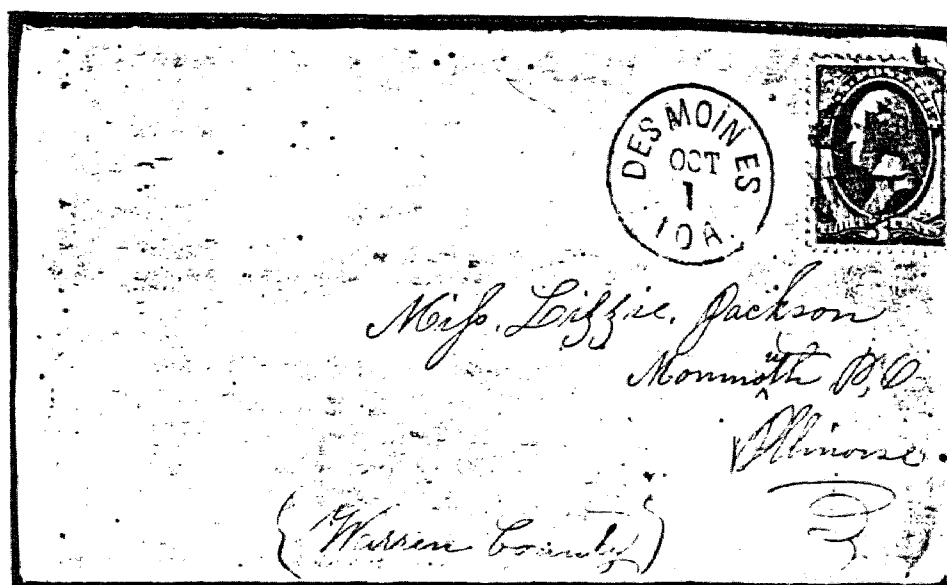


Fig. 115. DES MOINES/IOA./OCT 1 [1870], Type 13 with 3c 1870 (#147). In enclosed letter Sadie Crawford, a newly arrived farm girl, says *I like Iowa better than when we first come. We have a real good crop. I think we never had nicer corn.* This is earliest known use of 1870 issue from Des Moines.

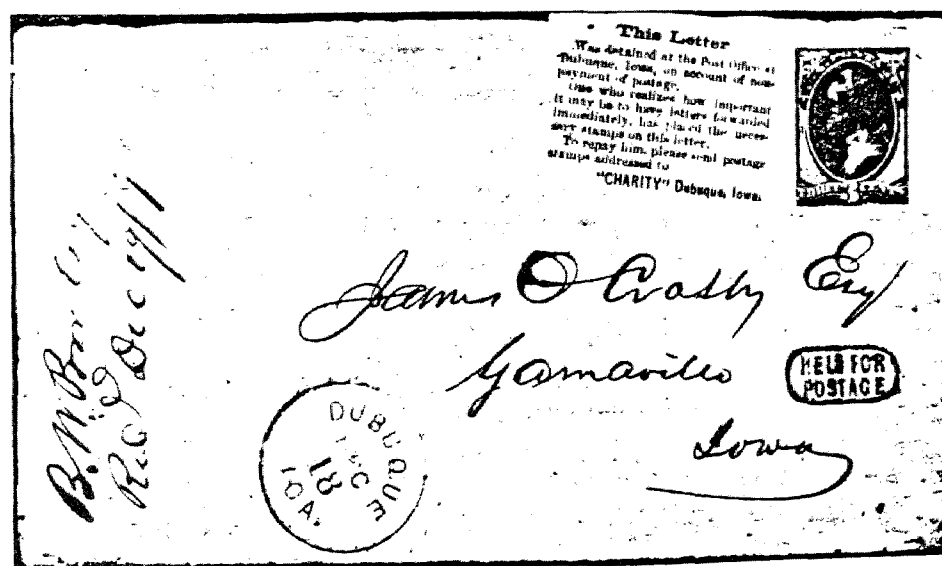


Fig. 116. The only Iowa "remission label" known to the author, on cover bearing 3c 1870 and DUBUQUE/IOA./DEC 18 [1871] postmark. The discovery of a cover bearing a similar label of the Des Moines Postal Association would be a major breakthrough in Des Moines postal history.

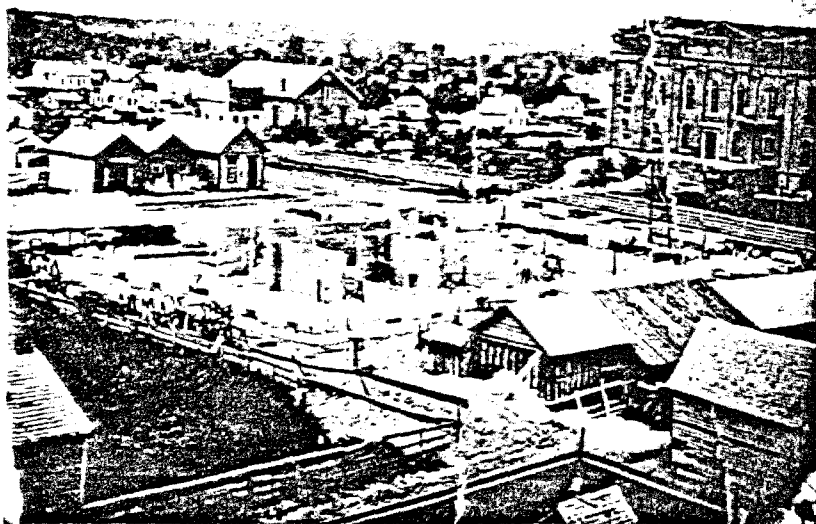


Fig. 117. Progress of federal building construction as recorded by photographer Jo Sharman in early morning of July 1, 1868. Note Polk County courthouse in right background.



Fig. 118. The completed federal building which housed the Des Moines post office from December 1, 1870 to March 12, 1910. This west-side view from the courthouse lawn probably dates from 1872 when the fountain was installed.

POST OFFICE,

Des Moines, Feby 19th 1871

My Dear General -

Please convey my sincere thanks to Gen Grant for his kindness in reappointing me and assure him I shall continue to be his devoted friend, warm admirer and earnest supporter -

Please give my regards & convey my thanks also to one & all those gentlemen who aided in securing my appointment & confirmation. Of these I trust I may include Gen Horace Porter, Belknap, Pleasanton, Spencer and Messrs Harlan & Howell and our own dear Allison Palmer.

Again accept for yourself my heartfelt thanks.

I can as well leave home as not after the 28th inst & if I can render you any service there, telegraph me.

Again let me urge you to look well after the Marshalship -

There is great excitement here over my appointment - all say "Dodge did it" -

Sincerely yours

Geo. B. Tichenor

P.S. What about that contract I asked for my friend Fleming - m^{ch}

Fig. 119. Tichenor's Feb. 19, 1871 letter of thanks to Grenville Dodge for his reappointment as postmaster. Please convey My sincere thanks to Gen. Grant for his kindness in reappointing me... There is great excitement here over my appointment—all say "Dodge did it."



Fig. 120. DES MOINES/IOA./JUL 15 [1871], Type 14, on cover free franked by Iowa Senator George G. Wright. Wright, who served March 4, 1871 to March 3, 1877, was the man responsible for George Tichenor's resignation as postmaster.



Fig. 121. James S. (Ret) Clarkson, ninth postmaster whose actual dates of service were Sept. 1, 1871-July 1, 1879. He is the only Des Moines postmaster to have later held a powerful Post Office Department position in Washington.



Fig. 122. This elevated view of the new Des Moines postoffice (#1) is part of a 360 degrees panoramic view taken by Everett from the court house cupola on a Sunday morning in early summer of 1873. This view, looking east down Court Ave., is remarkable for the number of things of postal importance shown. On Court Ave. sits a horse and buggy (#1a) waiting for a patron to return from checking his postoffice box, and in the background (on 3d Street) can be seen the two previous Des Moines postoffice buildings (#2 used 1866-70 and #3 Sherman's Block used 1856-66).

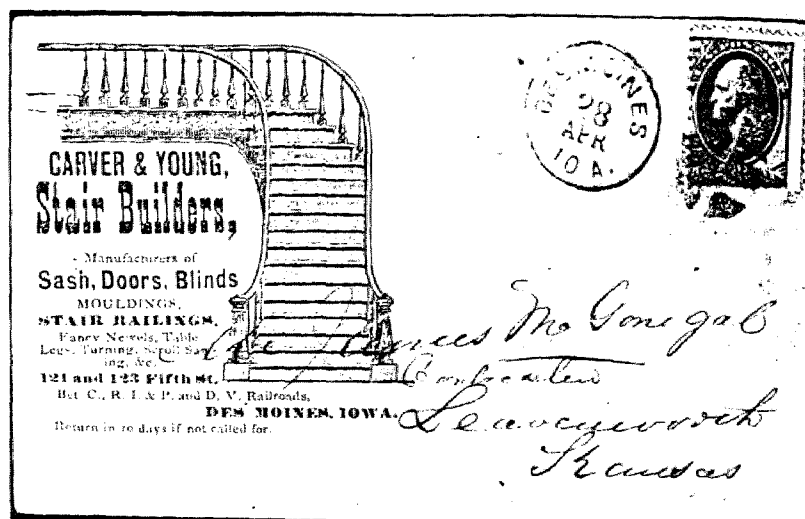


Fig. 123. DES MOINES/IOA./APR. 28 [1872 or 73], Type 15 with 3¢ 1870 (#147) on Carver & Young Stair Builders cover. Note the firm's location "Bet[ween] C., R.I. & P. and D.V. Railroads."

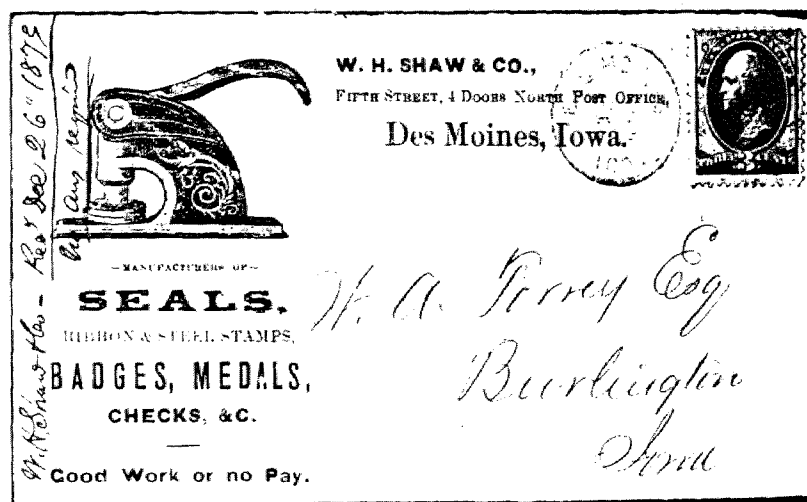


Fig. 124. DES MOINES/IOA./DEC. 24 [1873], Type 16 with 3¢ 1870 (#147) on W.H. Shaw & Co. seal manufacturer cover. On reverse is more printed advertisement for the firm, "...Hotel, Baggage checks, &c. Good Work, or No Pay."



Fig. 125. View looking east from corner of 5th and Walnut in 1888. On gas lamp post, to the right, is one of the round-top postal letter boxes installed in 1873. This would seem to discredit the 1873 fear that, exposed to the elements, the boxes would soon rust out. The omnibus, parked to the left of the lamp post, is marked "A.T. Johnson & Son/Rail Road," and apparently served to convey passengers to and from the railroad depots.



Fig. 126. DES MOINES/IOA/JUN 14 [1873], Type 16 on UX1. Although UX1 was first placed on sale at the Des Moines post office May 29, 1873, this card represents the earliest existing use known from the city.

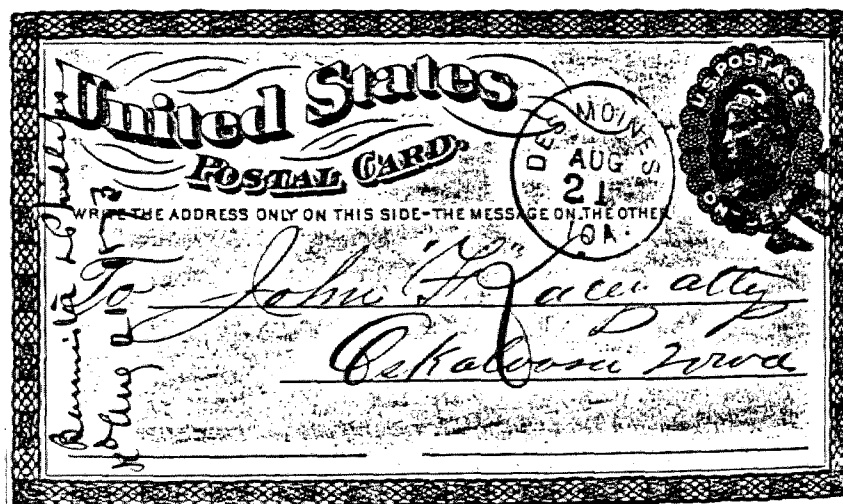


Fig. 127. DES MOINES/IOA./AUG. 21 [1873], Type 16 on UX3. This card represents the earliest known use of the small-watermark variety from Des Moines.



Fig. 130. DES MOINES/IOA./29 DEC. [1875], Type 17 on UX3, the latest known use of an 1873-issue card from Des Moines.



Fig. 131. Frank W. Palmer (1827-1907) who during his March 4, 1869 to March 3, 1873 tenure in Congress obtained many postal benefits for Des Moines. He had served as **Register** editor 1861-1868. In 1873 he moved to Chicago where he edited the **Inter-Ocean** and served as postmaster Feb. 26, 1877 to May 5, 1885. He also served as Public Printer of the United States 1889-1894 and 1897-1905.

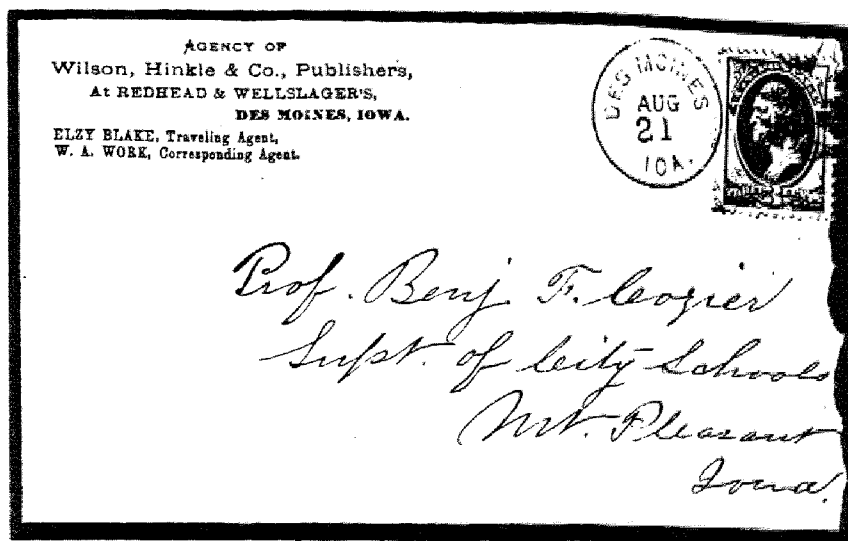


Fig. 132. DES MOINES/IOA./AUG. 21 [1873]. Type 16 with 3c 1870 (#147) and Wilson, Hinkle & Co. corner card. This cover entered the mail during the transitional period between the starting date for free delivery in the business district (July 24, 1873) and the date (mid Oct. 1873) when completed street and house numbering permitted carrier service all across town.



Fig. 133. The earliest known photograph of Des Moines mail carriers is this January 1875 group picture by Lewis. The men have been identified, left to right, as: Front row, **Archey Christy**, John Deer, **William Hoppee**, **Farron Olmsted**. Back row, Mr. Humphrey, John A. King, and Mr. Humphrey's brother. The bold face names represent the four carriers who began the city's free-delivery service in July 1873.

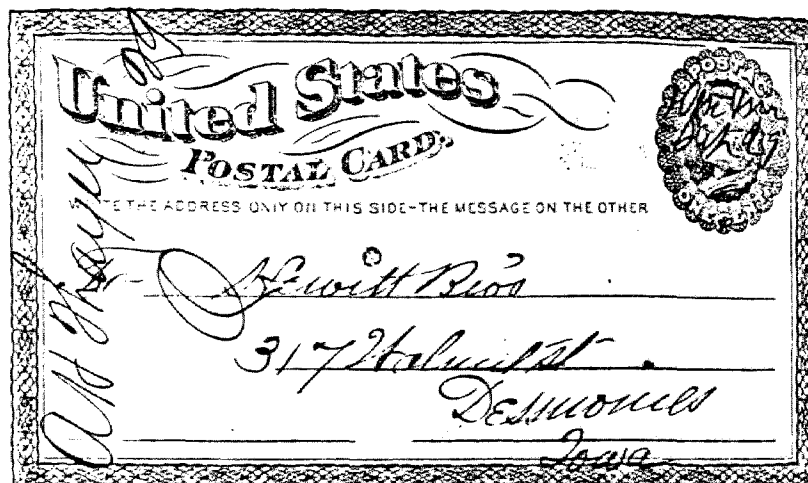


Fig. 134. The numbered business address on this UX3 postcard complies with the request of the Des Moines post office for the use of building numbers following the start of free delivery. Compliance, however, does not seem to have been the general norm until the 1880s. The manuscript "D M & M Sept 29" [1874] postmark on this card is that of the Des Moines & Minneapolis R.R.

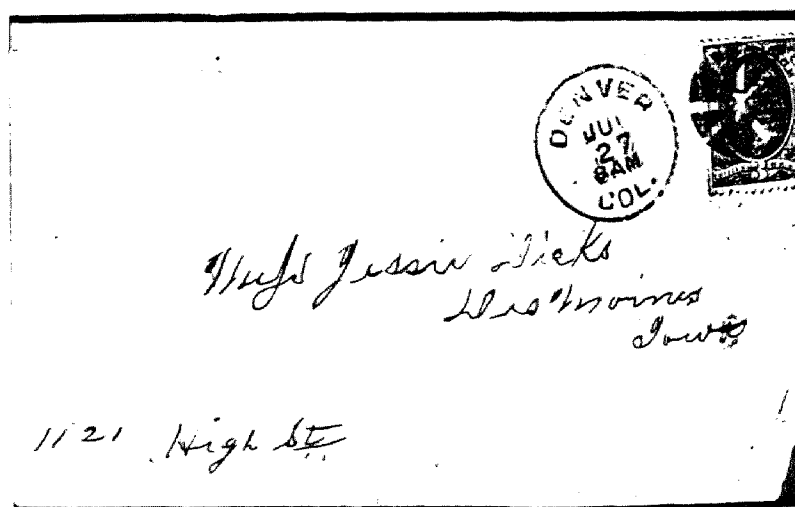


Fig. 135. DENVER/COL./JUL 27 8 AM [circa 1881-82] on 3c 1881 (#207). The writing of the numbered Des Moines street address in lower left corner appears to have been almost an afterthought. At this time most of the writing public in the West and Midwest still felt uncomfortable about the use of the requested residence number in free-delivery cities.

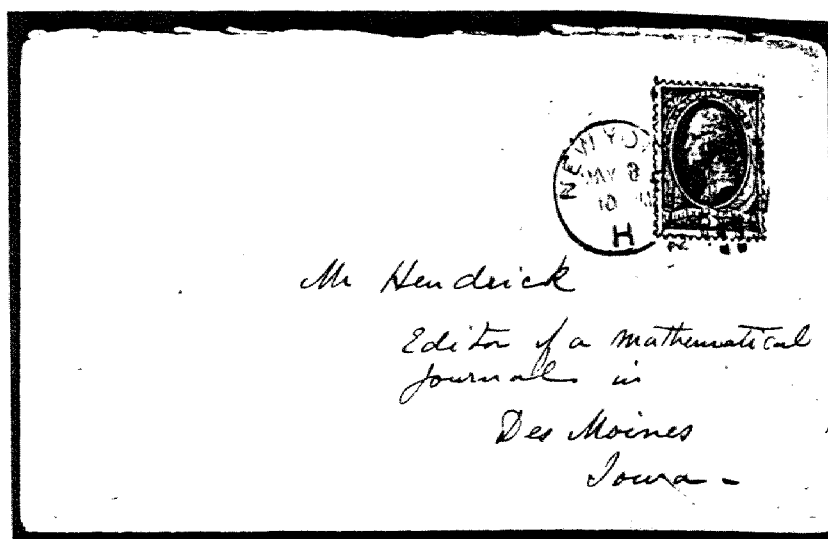


Fig. 136. NEW YORK/H/MAY 8 10 [P?]M [18]82 ellipse postmark on 3¢ 1881 (#207). The vague Des Moines address is typical of the non-compliance directions that mailmen have had to put up with from the earliest days of free delivery.





| | letters delivered | drop letters delivered | postcards delivered | drop postcards delivered | newspapers delivered |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| DES MOINES (15,061) | | | | | |
| Aug. 1873 | 17,577 | 2,132 | ..... | ..... | 8,136 |
| Oct. " | 27,338 | 2,904 | ..... | ..... | 14,373 |
| Nov. " | 24,197 | 1,970 | 3,311 | 337 | 16,055 |
| Jan. 1874 | 30,762 | 2,408 | 4,267 | 1,841 | 20,286 |
| Feb. " | 28,806 | 3,959 | 4,349 | 972 | 19,589 |
| Mar. " | 33,347 | 3,462 | 5,230 | 1,107 | 22,112 |
| DAVENPORT (21,250) | | | | | |
| Aug. 1873 | 12,494 | 742 | ..... | ..... | 7,236 |
| Oct. " | 14,133 | 1,872 | ..... | ..... | 9,940 |
| Nov. " | 14,139 | 1,154 | 2,527 | 796 | 10,157 |
| Jan. 1874 | 17,879 | 1,582 | 2,919 | 830 | 12,868 |
| Feb. " | 18,420 | 3,256 | 4,349 | 1,349 | 18,802 |
| Mar. " | 20,701 | 1,436 | 3,833 | 1,186 | 17,042 |
| DUBUQUE (22,151) | | | | | |
| Aug. 1873 | 10,361 | 839 | ..... | ..... | 7,561 |
| Oct. " | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| Nov. " | 19,387 | 891 | 2,879 | 787 | 14,245 |
| Jan. 1874 | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| Feb. " | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| Mar. " | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |












Fig. 137. 1873-74 post office delivery statistics of Iowa's three free-delivery cities as taken from the **Register** of Oct. 8, Nov. 6, & Dec. 7, 1873 and Feb. 22, March 5, & April 5, 1874. The figures in parenthesis behind the town names are the corresponding population figures for 1873.


APPENDIX B

Postmark Charts


DES MOINES POSTAL MARKINGS

| Type Number | Postmark and Size | Color of Marking | Dates of Use | No. Known to Author | Auxiliary Markings and Remarks |
|-------------|--|------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| A | <i>Hacorn River Sept 24</i> | black | July 9, 1846 Sept. 24, 1846 | 2 | 5- 10 One of the scarcest Iowa territorial postmarks |
| B | <i>Fort Des Moines Ia Oct 13</i> | black | Feb. 17, 1847 April 19, 1848 | 4 | 5- 10 |
| 1 |  34 mm | red | April 23, 1849 May 15, 1852 | 15 | 1 5 W 30 PAID All recorded uses of Type 1 are on stampless |
| 2 |  33 mm | black | Jan. 12, 1853 June 23, 1856 | 56 | 3 (PA/C 3) 5  <i>Mussett + Ford</i> |
| | | blue | Nov. 3, 1856 March 18, 1857 | 2 | |
| 3 |  33 mm | blue | May 4, 1857 July 1, 1857 | 3 | |


| | | | | | | |
|---|-------|---|-------|--------------------------------|----|---|
| 4 | 33 mm |  | black | Sept. 10, 1857 | 1 | Created by removing "Fort" in Type 3 |
| 5 | 32 mm |  | black | Feb. 7, 1858 Aug. 14, 1861 | 18 |  |
| 6 | 34 mm |  | black | June 7, 1859 Sept. 11, 1859 | 2 | The East Des Moines office was established May 15, 1858. Both examples of this indistinct marking tie copies of the 3¢ 1857 (#26), and have the day written in by hand. |
| 7 | 25 mm |  | black | Jan. 28, 1860 | 1 |  |
| 8 | 25 mm |  | black | May 8, 1860 May 30, 1860 | 2 | Created by removing "East" in Type 7. East Des Moines office was discontinued Feb. 10, 1860 |
| 9 | 25 mm |  | black | July 15, 1860 June 6, 1863 | 25 |    |

| | | | | | |
|----|---|--------|-------|---------------|----|
| 10 |  | 22½ mm | black | Jan. 18, 1865 | 14 |
| | | | blue | Dec. 1, 1866 | 1 |



| | | | | | |
|----|---|-------|-------|----------------|----|
| 11 |  | 24 mm | black | March 23, 1867 | 15 |
| | | | | Sept. 18, 1869 | |



| | | | | | |
|----|---|-------|-------|----------------|---|
| 12 |  | 25 mm | black | Sept. 30, 1869 | 4 |
| | | | | March 5, 1870 | |



There is no space between S and M, and D drops below S of Moines.

| | | | | | |
|----|---|-------|-------|---------------|---|
| 13 |  | 25 mm | black | July 20, 1870 | 5 |
| | | | | Feb. 14, 1871 | |



The D and S of Moines are parallel, and there is a space between N and E of Moines. The letters are also ½ mm larger than those of postmark 12 or 14-16.

| | | | | | |
|----|---|-------|-------|--------------|---|
| 14 |  | 25 mm | black | July 6, 1871 | 4 |
| | | | | Nov. 2, 1871 | |



Space restored between S and M, and S of Moines drops below D of Des.

15  25 mm black July 29, 1872
Sept. 27, 1872 8

16  25 mm black June 14, 1873
March 11, 1876 13

17  27 mm black Sept. 13, 1875
May 29, 1876 12



Space between S and M removed again, and D of Des drops below S of Moines.



Similar to postmark 13 in spacing, but letters smaller and larger space between S and M.



After January 1876 the space-filler bars were shifted to the top of the date logo.

APPENDIX C

Postmaster Compensation
and Office Receipts

Des Moines Postmaster Compensation
and Office Receipts 1846-1871¹

| Postmaster & Time Period | Compensation | Office Receipts |
|---|--------------|-----------------|
| Thomas K. Brooks (July 1, 1846 - Feb. 5, 1847) | \$ 17.80 | \$ 34.32 |
| Phineas M. Casady (Feb. 5 - June 30, 1847) | 22.38 | 31.11 |
| (July 1 - Dec. 31, 1848) | 76.54 | 101.13 |
| Robert L. Tidrick (Jan. 1 - June 30, 1849) | 107.45 | 151.82 |
| Hoyt Sherman (July 1, 1850 - June 30, 1851) | 411.17 | 607.89 |
| Wesley Redhead (July 1, 1854 - June 30, 1855) | 822.03 | 1,140.11 |
| (July 1, 1856 - June 30, 1857) | 1,939.38 | 2,827.94 |
| (July 1, 1860 - May 31, 1861) | 1,635.16 | 2,509.50 |
| John Teesdale (June 1 - 30, 1861) | 164.83 | 233.64 |
| (July 1, 1862 - June 30, 1863) | 2,000.00 | 5,461.69 |
| (July 1, 1864 - June 30, 1865) | 2,600.00 | 5,648.13 |
| (July 1, 1866 - May 16, 1867) | 3,242.58 | 5,623.77 |
| George C. Tichenor (May 17 - June 30, 1867) | 457.42 | 493.52 |
| (July 1, 1868 - June 30, 1869) | 4,000.00 | 11,073.83 |
| (July 1, 1870 - June 30, 1871) | 4,000.00 | N/A |

¹ Source: Register of All Officers and Agents, 1847, 1849, 1851, 1855, 1857, 1861, 1863, 1865, 1867, 1869, 1871.